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Plus: Clive Barker, Dario Argento, Wes Craven

John Goodman in 'Matinee'

0 6





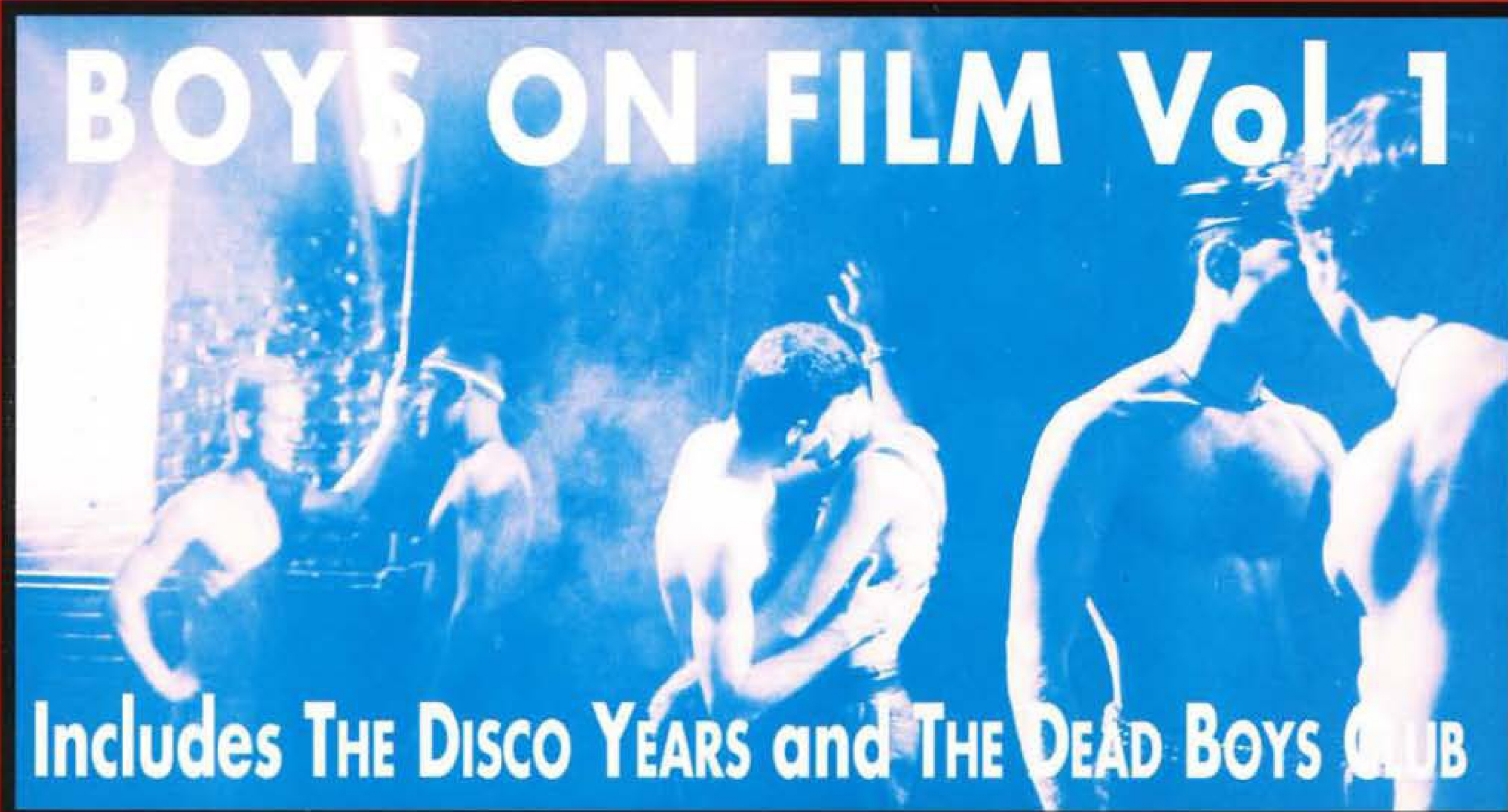
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# Sight and Sound



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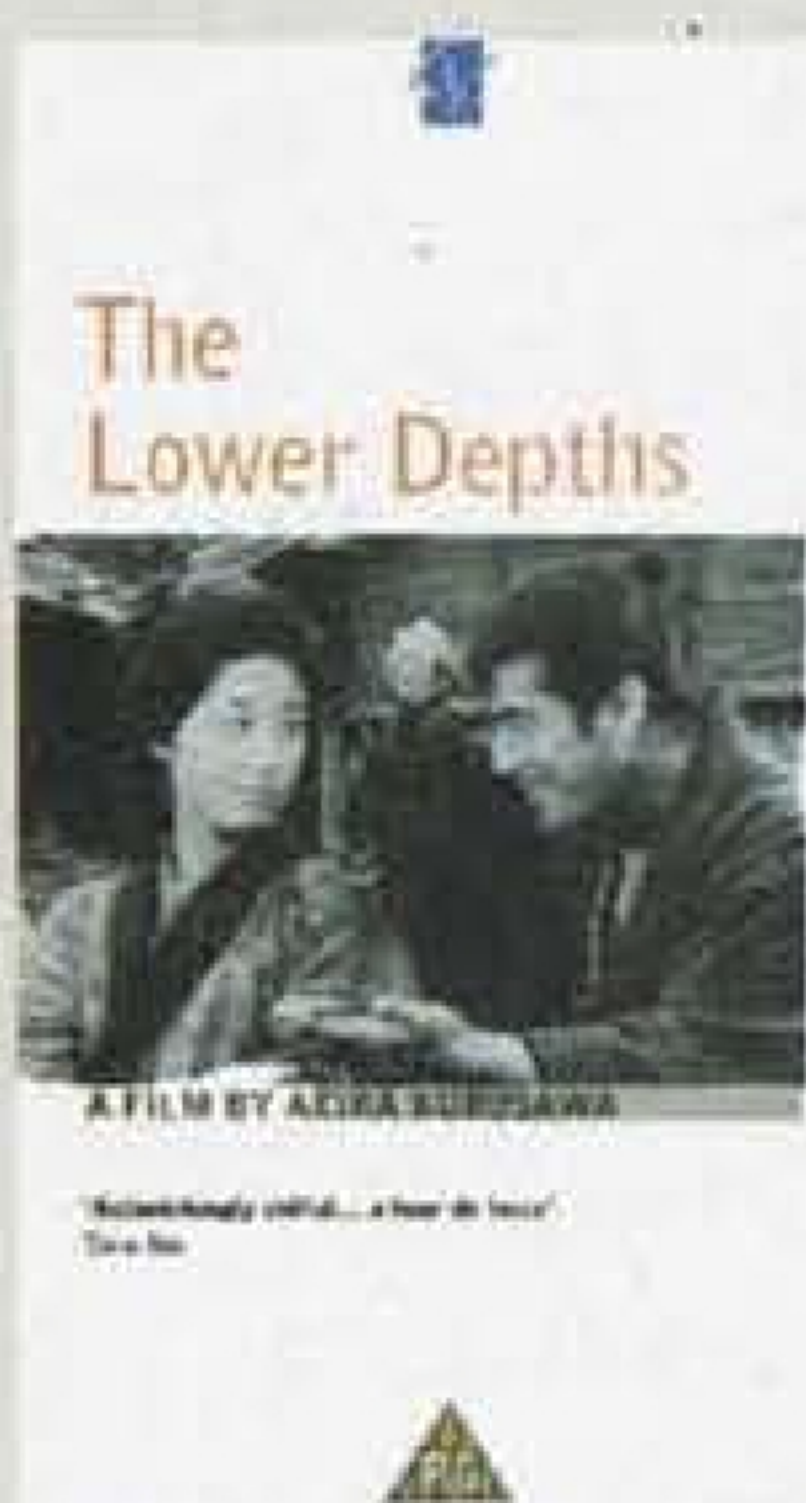
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# Small hopes

## Contributors to this issue

**Lem Dobbs'** screenwriting credits include Soderbergh's *Kafka*

**James Donald** is author of *Sentimental Education*

**Professor Patricia Brett Erens'** books include *The Jew in American Cinema*

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**Richard Trainor** is a Paris-based film critic

**Leonardo Garcia Tsao** is a Mexico City-based film critic

**Simon Watney's** *Practices of Freedom: Selected Writings on HIV/Aids* will be published later this year; he is the director of the Red Hot Aids Charitable Trust

The boom in video – celebrated in *Sight and Sound's* recent Film on Video supplement – has meant that a large proportion of the traditional 'subsidised cinema' repertoire has apparently now found its principal habitat in the living room. As even more films become available for home viewing, and as people in Britain apparently demand even more home entertainment, the existence as well as the culture of the 'subsidised cinema' is called into question (once again). Yet in real terms, if a wide range of films is available on video, does it matter that such cinemas, with their commitments and idiosyncrasies, fade away?

It matters a lot. It matters for encouraging film literacy, and even more importantly, film curiosity – for encouraging viewers to look beyond what is 'officially' on offer, whether at the local Odeon or the high-street video shop, and to develop an appetite for what has been forgotten or marginalised. At its height, the currently embattled Scala energetically promoted other readings of the 'map' of cinema, whether canonising Russ Meyer or George Kuchar, or giving prominent space to filmmakers such as Tsui Hark and Nelly Kaplan.

The importance of outlets not in hock to the majors will become increasingly clear as fewer films from fewer major distributors come to fill a higher percentage of the available screens. And as the consensual atmosphere that governs our consumption of cinema – the atmosphere that determines that, in a given week, so many thousands of viewers will see *Indecent Proposal* – intensifies. (This is not to assume that 'minority' films are necessarily worth showing: *Un Coeur en hiver*, which is likely to do well on the circuit, is as drearily formulaic as you can get.) The key value of a thriving 'subsidised' network is the possibility it holds out of creating film-going communities other than the dominant ones.

This means in part that the cinemas must attend to local constituencies and their needs.

But the issue of the composition of the constituencies these cinemas serve is not something that ought to be ignored. After all, these places have a responsibility not merely to existing audiences that support and are supported by them, but to *potential* ones. For example, they have a real responsibility to become hospitable to people who don't find their identities mirrored in the 'culture' of these cinemas, and also to remember that those who want cinema-going to be a stylish occasion are not necessarily frivolous. (The success of Mark Booth and Nubian Tales in attracting new black audiences into London's commercial Prince Charles cinema shows what can be done as long as solemnity isn't confused with seriousness.)

Most important, there is a need to serve secondary school students, the constituencies of the future, not with the usual children's fare (or Shakespeare on film), but rather with imaginative raiding of cinema's history.

Of course, some cinemas are already doing this – but to put it mildly, more could be done.

Given the way classic films, often *causes célèbres* on their first appearance, are presently given generous classification (*Metropolis* is certificate PG, *Les Diaboliques* is certificate 15), it ought to be easy to bring school students into the cinemas regularly during the school day, and to provide them with challenging films.

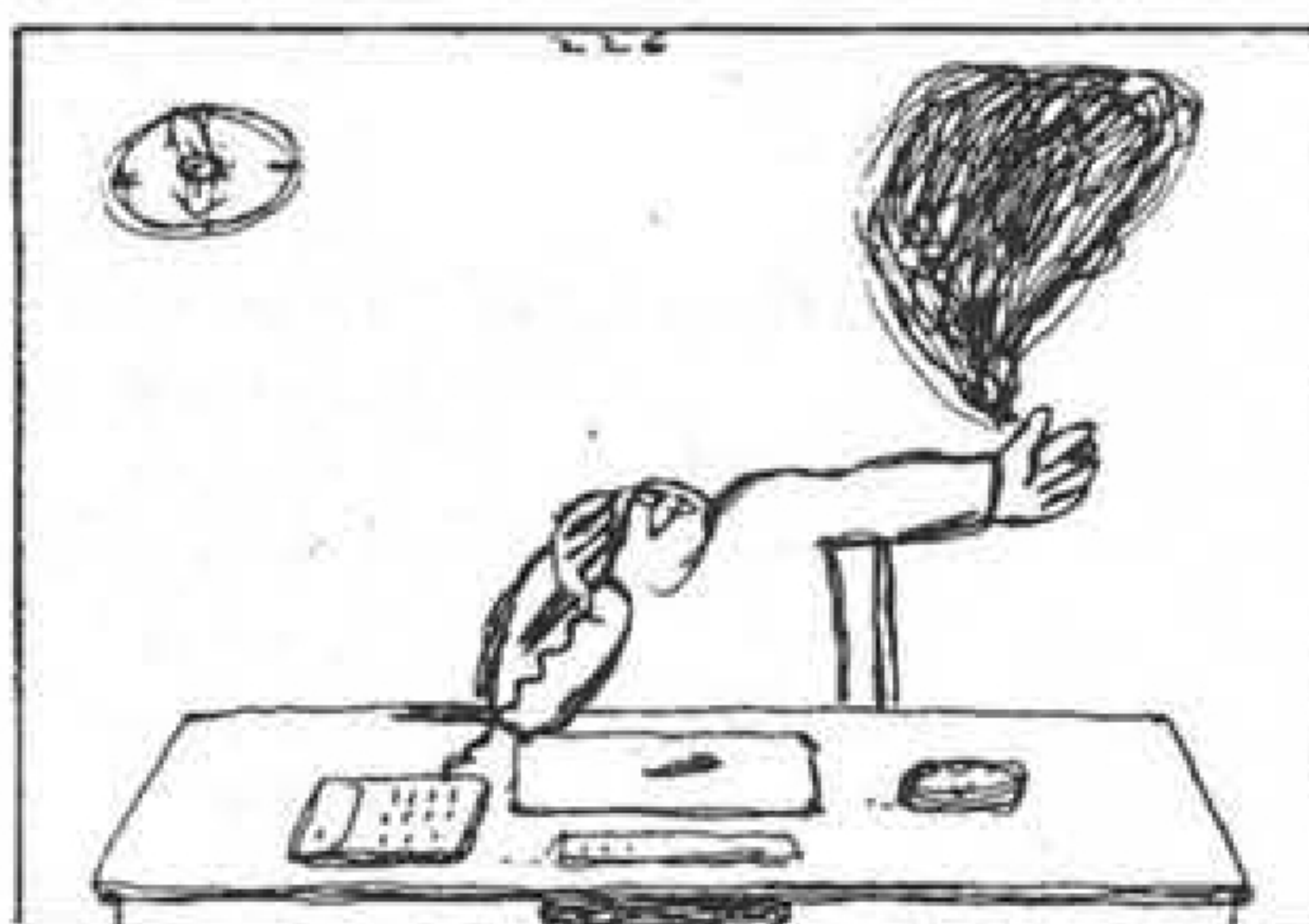
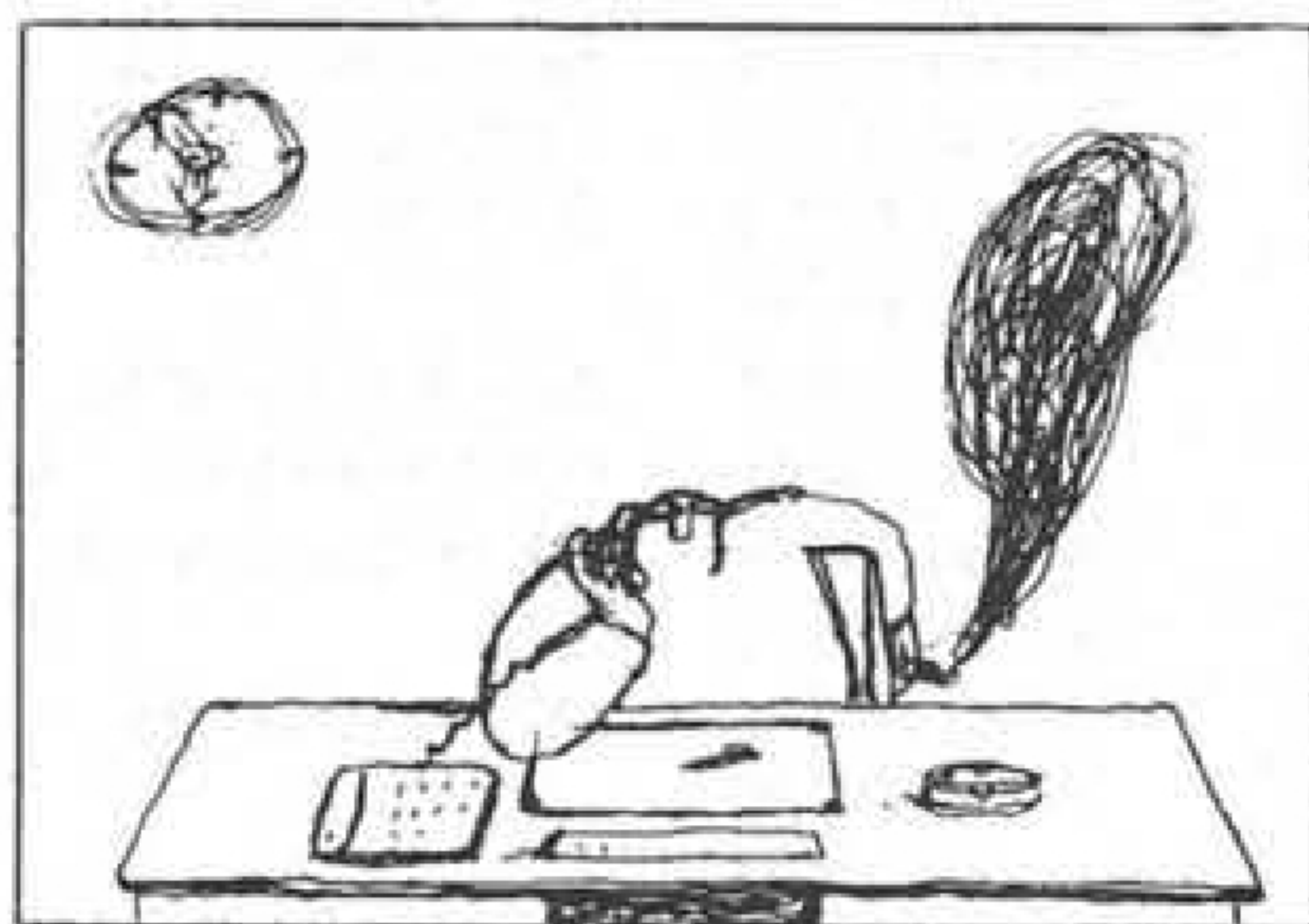
If the subsidised sector is to win the battles ahead, it won't do so if it doesn't have support across the community – not least among young filmgoers. The Jesuits were right – you need to get them young.

## PPA awards and Sight and Sound

At last month's awards of the PPA (the BAFTA of the magazine world), *Sight and Sound* won two awards: Small Publisher of the Year and Best Designed Magazine of the Year. 650 magazines entered for the PPA awards. *Sight and Sound* was the only magazine to win two awards.

## JERRY ON LINE #1

Peter Lydon – James Sillavan ©



'Jerry, remember Cannes when the day's first big decision was where to have lunch; when seeing a naked woman who wasn't your wife was a novelty and the done thing was never to be seen at a screening. Now it's all one long meeting and I'm not sure it's worth the expense.'



Stanley Kubrick's new film... Cannes' private screenings... the most bankable director...

# The business

● A decade or so ago, I was in the gate-house at Elstree Studios, trying to prise some information out of the famously surly gatekeeper, when the telephone rang.

"Gate," snarled the gatekeeper, making it clear that it was a four-letter word. Then he paused, so the caller would assume he was checking a number whereas in fact he was continuing to read *The Daily Mail*. Then he barked: "No one there."

Another pause followed, during which the caller apparently asked if he could leave a message with his name, provoking a stentorian sigh directed full into the mouthpiece. The gatekeeper dropped the phone on the desk, took his time finding a message pad and then very slowly wrote down the words: "Mr C-U-B-R-I-K".

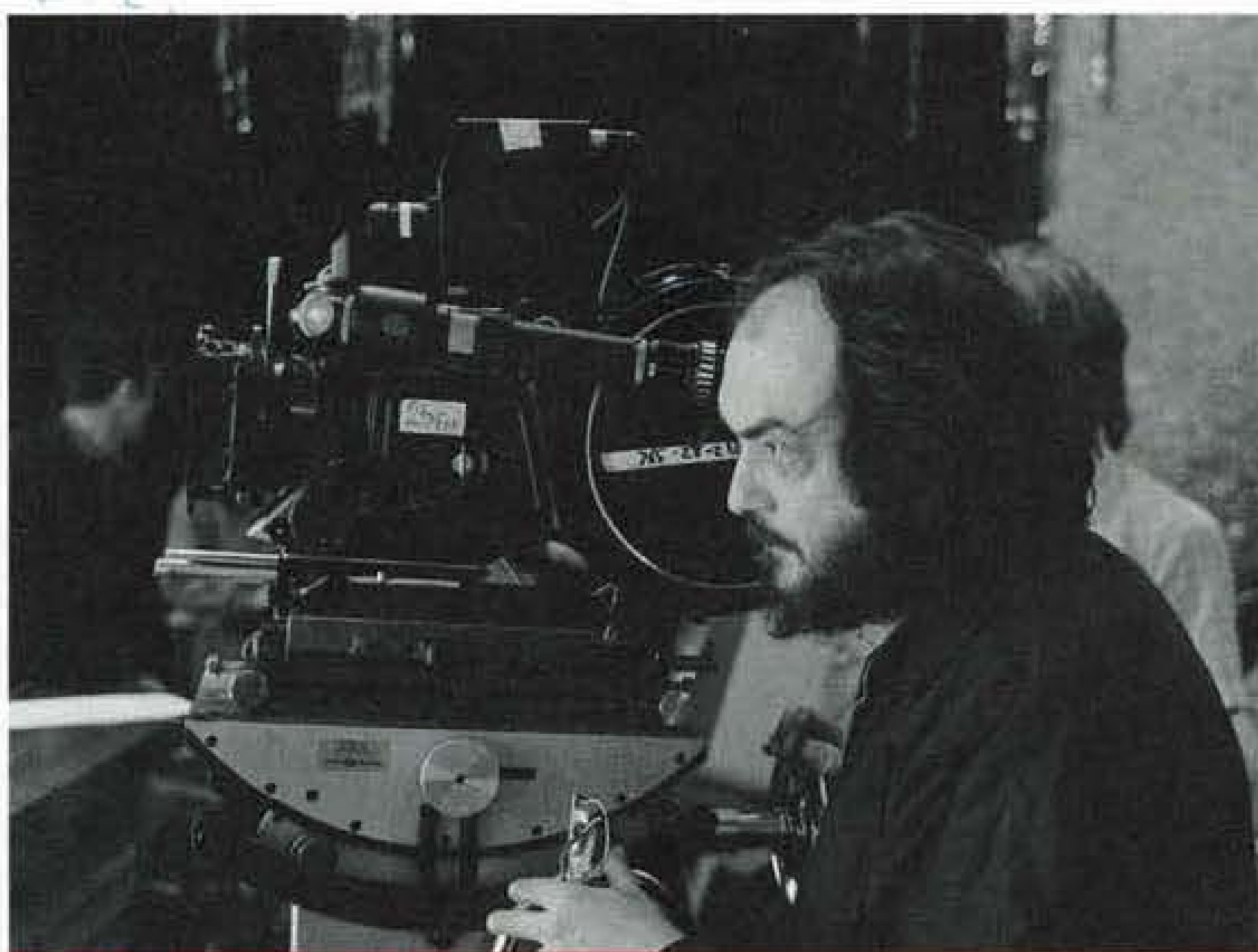
I take considerable pleasure in that memory, because it brings together three things. One, the certainty that, try as we may, we in Britain will never manage to glamorise the film business. Two, the pleasure of seeing a notoriously inflated ego pricked, however slightly. And three, the fact that the story paradoxically reinforces the reputation on which that ego rested, since if it had been 'John Badham' or 'Hugh Hudson' the gatekeeper had mis-spelled, the story would have been without interest.

That morning in Elstree was brought back to me by two things recently: the television screening of *2001: A Space Odyssey*; and the announcement that, after nearly a decade, Mr C-U-B-R-I-K may be about to make a new film. Let's take them in order.

For all the reduction in size of the image, television turned out to be a surprisingly good medium for re-watching *2001*, since it freed one from sharing the experience with the several hundred stoned hippies that repertory cinema revivals invariably bring out of the woodwork. The *Stargate* sequence upset the cat, though, which had been quite enjoying the evening until then.

As for the new film, its existence could – at press time – best be described as a leak, since no one, least of all Mr K himself, was prepared to confirm or deny that he would make it. The 'leak', however, made the cover of *Daily Variety*, stressing the director's mythical status (*DV* doesn't usually trouble itself with such auteurist gossip). It will apparently be a historical war epic (staple Kubrick territory) and is likely to be shot in the Slovak Republic, enabling Kubrick to get to the location without resorting to aeroplanes, a quirk which has in the past led to *Lolita*'s all-American home being relocated to Gerrard's Cross and the Vietnam War to Becton Gas Works.

And that – going on past form – is



Stanley Kubrick: set to shoot again

more or less all that anyone is likely to know about the film until it premieres.

● One further reflection on the Kubrick myth, in the aftermath of the ruling that a recent screening of *'A Clockwork Orange'* at the Scala cinema in London was illegal: why is it that, while the Hollywood studios are currently throwing all their weight behind the campaign to prevent the notion of a director's copyright being written into international trade law, they are quite happy to apply the same notion in this one absurd instance? I say absurd because, in the days before video, I tried to rent a 16mm copy of the film, to be told that it was available only for screenings in "Hospitals, Prisons and Borstals".

## SINGAPORE NOTES

Concern about film sex and violence... a public row over a scene depicting homosexuality on a primetime television soap... uncertainty over what controls exist to prevent uncensored satellite television coming in from overseas. A familiar, if depressing, description of recent media debates.

But this is not Britain. Instead it is Singapore, now in the middle of a far-reaching controversy over how far – if at all – the hitherto strictly regulated art and entertainment media should change to reflect modern technology and globally changing tastes in cinema and television.

The debate is important. A 1992 poll showed that Singapore's 3 million population was the most cinema-going in the world, with an average attendance for every adult of 7.9 movies a year (UK 1.7; US 3.8). It has Asia's largest cinema, a 10-screen multiplex in a dense housing estate.

Yet many films are cut (often severely – *In Bed with Madonna* was 11 minutes shorter in Singapore than in the UK) to reflect a stricter moral code in line with the findings of a Censorship Review Committee, part of Singapore's Ministry of

● Speaking of the Scala, a further update on the (I think the word is) irrepressibility of the former Scala programmer and Palace Pictures supremo Steve Woolley, admirably undaunted by the collapse of his second empire. Woolley's plans for *Interview with the Vampire* may have to be put temporarily on hold by the unavailability of Brad Pitt (apparently harder to pin down than the investors who backed Palace). But another project, *Backbeat*, has stepped into the breach, promising the true story of the "love, life and death of Stuart Sutcliffe, the fifth Beatle". That is now shooting, under director Ian Softley.

Information and Arts. Category R(A) – for Restricted (Art) – films are the frequently cut versions of UK category 18 movies; they can be shown only to those over 21 and only in the minority of cinemas in city and town centres. The majority of Singaporean picture houses are in government housing estates, and can show only the films which in the UK would be category 15 or lower.

Restrictions on television are predictably greater still. The Singapore Broadcasting Corporation was asked by the government to pull back from its move towards greater artistic liberalisation (very mild by most global standards) after an SBC Mandarin-language soap opera showed one character as overtly homosexual.

Last autumn the government created a Television Censorship Review Committee; in the words of Arts Minister George Yeo, the committee members were "people known to have conservative views – which was why they were chosen." The difficulties of controlling television content are obvious for the small island. Three terrestrial SBC channels were last year joined by

● The British rock scene is also the setting for a project that has been on the books for quite a while, but now seems more on than off: *'Hammer of the Gods'*, based on the life of Led Zeppelin manager Peter Grant. Mike Figgis may direct.

● *Backbeat*, meanwhile, was being pre-sold at Cannes by Manifesto, the once hip sales company which is now an offshoot of Polygram. Having been rather well served by Cannes in the past (it set a record by taking two Palmes d'Or in a row with *Wild at Heart* and *Barton Fink* in 1990 and 1991), the company this year decided that it didn't much like the idea of a festival being a place where people got to see films, and labelled five out of its six market screenings "by invitation only", making sure that only the right sort of people – the ones with the money to buy the distribution rights – got a look in. Sadly for the company, the festival prevented Manifesto from achieving a complete shut-out by selecting the sixth film, Jim McBride's *The Wrong Man*, for the 'Un Certain Regard' section, thereby guaranteeing it some festival exposure.

● Speaking of Cannes, have you ever wondered how they decide the dates on which films in competition are screened? Put all the titles into a hat, maybe? Tell that to some of the companies who didn't get the slots they would have liked. Anyone looking for a clue to the processes at work might care to track the changes in the competition screening dates of *'Mazeppa'*, a film about horses produced by Marin Karmitz, a man not without a certain influence in French film

three so-called cable channels – so-called because, until the country is cabled in 1994, they will go out terrestrially on ultra-high frequency wavelengths, but viewers will need a decoder to de-encrypt them.

Less easy to control is the spread of videos and software. George Yeo has given what some believe to be the Singapore government's first acceptance that such matters cannot be fully regulated. In a recent parliamentary debate, he said: "Technology has not yet given us a way to bring about full control. What we can do is to crack down hard on distributors. It is not practical to try to catch all individual offenders."

But controls are clearly going to remain in mass-media activity in Singapore. The magazine *Cosmopolitan*, banned in 1982 for allegedly promoting promiscuous values, is to remain illegal despite a desire by its publishers to create a special edition appropriate to Singapore. A recent issue of *Marie Claire* was also banned.

Singapore clearly feels it can continue to stem the flow of what it considers morally inappropriate material – a flow which may turn into an unstoppable tide. Graham Norwood



circles. From a mid-week screening – the sort of slot reserved for competition entries from directors without extensive lobbying powers – ‘Mazeppa’ managed a plum slot on Sunday, when French rubber-neckers are at their thickest.

● The arrival of capitalism continues to cause chaos in the former Soviet film business. The country’s two major studios – Mosfilm and Lenfilm, the latter still clinging to the old name of its home town – continue to churn out projects which seem only slightly different from the days when they were wholly controlled by the State Committee for Cinematography.

The former state sales agency, Sovexportfilm, meanwhile, has reverted to its old name after a few brief months as Rosfilmexport (I suspect because they couldn’t afford to have the stationery reprinted) and plods doggedly onwards with its familiar mixture of bravado and incompetence.

But the Cannes Film Festival did at least reveal one sign of new life: the presence of a Russian Independents stand, run by Oleg Sulkin and Eugene Zykov, two former Sovexportfilm executives who went independent 18 months ago. “Last year,” says Sulkin, “we were pioneers at Cannes as the first private Russian company with its own stand. This time, we are providing our domestic partners with full promotion and consulting services for the world film market.”

Not that capitalism has necessarily made things any easier for the independents. Plans had to be entirely revamped at the last minute, reported Zykov, because of trouble with passports. In the old days, it was exit visas that were the problem. Nowadays, however, Russian citizens have to travel on Russian passports, and the combination of entrenched bureaucracies and a shortage of the passports themselves resulted in several Cannes-bound film-makers being obliged to stay at home.

Funded by the Elbim Bank, which counts the Bolshoi Theatre among its 100 or so shareholders, the Russian Independents represented one film in competition – Alexander Khwan’s *Dyuba-Dyuba* – plus a dozen or so films screening in the Market.

Notable among these was *Dikij vostok* (*The Wild East*), a futuristic parody based on *The Seven Samurai*, made in Kazakhstan by Rashid Nugmanov and produced by his brother, Murat. On its evidence, the former Soviet Union seems condemned to live through a period of exorcism like that of Spanish cinema in the years following the death of Franco.

“I was conceived in the year of the death of Stalin and the birth of rock ‘n’ roll,” says the director. “It’s



‘The Wild East’: Stalin meets rock ‘n’ roll

inside me, in my blood. I’m a child of Stalin and rock ‘n’ roll. And I’ve been Soviet.”

**R**eports from the Normandy set of ‘*Jeanne la Pucelle*’ suggest business only 50 per cent as usual. Sandrine Bonnaire, the latest actress to tackle the Joan of Arc role, was as usual not endearing herself to local hacks. But director Jacques Rivette’s demeanour was uncharacteristically cheerful. “I’ve never seen Jacques looking so happy,” reported one visitor. The film, which has been extensively



Joan of Arc (again)

pre-sold – on the basis of the international success of ‘*La Belle Noiseuse*’, rather than of a screenplay which might help buyers to make up their minds, since Rivette is sticking to his time-honoured practice of writing each day’s script the night before – is expected to finish post-production in October.

● Who is the world’s most bankable film director? Well, on the basis of the films being offered for pre-sales – a financing device pioneered in the days of freely available loans which has become endemic in the independent production community – at Cannes, the answer seems to be... Nic Roeg.

The director has no less than three projects listed as being in pre-production (an admittedly loose term in the world of international film sales, since the movie only gets made when the funding bucket is full enough): *Rocking Heart*, a thriller for producer Lindsay Flickinger about two men trapped by a woman in the wilds of Montana; *Heart of Darkness*, one of two new versions of the Joseph Conrad story, set to star John Malkovich and due to be made for Ted Turner’s Turner Pictures; and *Two Deaths*, produced by the director’s son Luc, which is described as “a simple tale of one man’s lifelong

passion for one woman and of his attempts to secure her love”.

Untypically for Roeg, only one of the films – *Rocking Heart* – will star Theresa Russell.

**F**inally, a tale designed to prove that comebacks are just as difficult for veteran directors as they are for ageing boxers. Almost a year ago, 84-year-old Marcel Carné began work on what was to be his first film for nearly 20 years: ‘*Mouche*’. Based on ‘*Le Bel Eté*’, a story by Guy de Maupassant about a group of friends in turn-of-the-century Montmartre, it was originally to have been the first film to shoot in the renovated Babelsberg studios in Potsdam.

But after nine months of announcements of an imminent start to principal photography, producer Antonio Passalia finally threw in the towel and the project seemed consigned to limbo. Last month, however, it was rescued by the energetic – and energetically self-promoting – Daniel Toscan du Plantier and is now all set to go again.

Carné experienced similar delays 50 years ago on ‘*Les Enfants du paradis*’, but that was because of censorship, not the recession.

● Correction: Robert Altman’s *Prêt à porter* is being produced by Miramax Films, not Spelling Films International, as stated in last month’s column.







Anxious projections: John Goodman as Lawrence Woolsey in 'Matinee', opposite; a monster in the making, right

# TERROR MASTER



From 'The Howling' to his new film 'Matinee', Joe Dante has explored terror. He talks about fear, special effects and 'The Mummy' to Mark Kermode

● A hardcore cinephile and long-time lover of horror films, Joe Dante learned his trade at Roger Corman's New World Studios, where he began by editing trailers. After working with John Sayles on the spoofy cult horror *Piranha* (1978), Dante scored a mainstream hit with *The Howling* (1980). Billed as the first movie to feature a full on-screen werewolf transformation, *The Howling* used innovative inflatable bladder techniques to facilitate body mutations. The film caught the attention of Steven Spielberg, who enlisted Dante to direct a segment of his *Twilight Zone the Movie* (1983). In 1984 Dante directed *Gremlins* (written by Chris Columbus and co-executive produced by Spielberg), his second major hit. More esoteric work followed, including a contribution to the camp spoof/homage *Amazon Women on the Moon* (1986) and the direction of *The 'burbs* (1988), a satirical fantasy about suburban nightmares. The ambitiously self-referential *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990) recaptured Dante's mainstream following while drawing applause from his more cineliterate fans.

Set in Key West during the tense days of the Cuban missile crisis, Dante's latest film *Matinee* is both a homage to the golden days of horror cinema and an intelligent investigation into the constructive role of horrific fantasy. John Goodman stars as terror master Lawrence Woolsey, a character inspired by the legendary film-maker and gimmick-monger William Castle, creator of *The Tingler* (1959) and *Homicidal* (1961). Woolsey is in town to promote his new film, *Mant* "Half man! Half ant! All terror!" to a population preoccupied by fears of impending nuclear disaster. *Mark Kermode: Do you think the horror film has reached an impasse?*

Joe Dante: I think the horror genre got stalled with the Freddy and Jason pictures; the cycle was repeating itself. But the success of Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* seems to have opened the door to bringing back material that hasn't been touched for a while. These things go in cycles – in the 50s there were the Hammer films that revived the Gothic, which may happen again with *Dracula* and Branagh's *Frankenstein*. Here at Universal there's a lot of interest in dusting off old properties and finding new ways to exploit them. I'm developing a version of *The Mummy* written by Alan Ormsby, who co-wrote *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things* and *Deranged*.

I think the old is going to come back, but largely for the wrong reasons. There's a feeling in Hollywood that everything that gets made has to be instantly recognisable – for example, the tremendous resurgence of projects based on old television shows, many of which seem to exist only because the titles are familiar. There's a lamentable reluctance to take risks, but given the state of the economy and the fact that the average movie now costs \$40 million, I don't see what you can do about it.

*Is the future of horror European, Asian or American?*

Currently there's no feeling of world cinema in America. When I was growing up in the 60s, there were movies playing everywhere that were made in other countries, and not just art films – commercial films, muscleman films, spy films, sci-fi films from Italy, Germany. You felt you knew what was going on.

Films by people like Michele Soavi are very hard to find here nowadays – they turn up mostly on videotape. So it appears that the future of the horror genre is on video because that's how all the interesting overseas work is released. I think that's unfortunate – there's no substitute for seeing a film in the theatre. As scared as you might get sitting at home watch- ▶





**Out of the dark: scenes from 'Matinee', where the Mant steps out of the screen, and where the pleasures of cinema are remembered**

◀ ing a flickering image, I think there's something more enveloping about the theatre. There's the whole dream metaphor – it's dark, and you're watching somebody else's dream on the big screen.

*The central thesis of 'Matinee' is that horror films are an antidote to the horrors of real life.*

That's right. At one point Lawrence Woolsey, the main character in the film, explains his reason for thinking horror films are good for you. He talks about the first cave painting, made after a caveman is chased into his cave by a mammoth. He's terrified, so he starts to draw a picture on the wall to tell people what happened. As he starts drawing, he thinks: "Well, if people are going to look at this, then I ought to make it good. I ought to make the teeth longer and make the eyes real mean and make it look *really* ferocious." And as he does this, the animated mammoth starts to grow and change and become really terrifying... and then he slaps it and it disappears. There it is – the first horror movie. People create something terrifying, then destroy it, and then everything's fine. It's a ritualised re-enactment of the conquering of your fears. The really insidious horror films are those that don't give you that release at the end. The ones that make you feel that evil hasn't been conquered, that it's still out there.

*When I was young, I remember feeling physically threatened by horror movies like 'The Exorcist'. Is that still possible?*

I think people nowadays are physically threatened by the audience! But no, there hasn't been anything with the impact of *The Exorcist* because *The Exorcist* is the 2001 of horror films. It's so clever and so nasty and works in such subtle ways with its audience that I don't think any other movie has come close to it.

When I was a kid I was like you – if a movie was good, then I would live in it for 90 minutes and when I came out I would take it away with me and try to relive it. There's a lot of that in *Matinee* – there's a scene where a seven-year-old has to sign a "Fright Release", and he's obviously scared to death, but he loves it. I used to have nightmares after horror movies. I would go to bed and wouldn't be able to sleep and my parents would get really annoyed. That's

the reason parents don't want kids to see horror movies – it's very inconvenient. The kids come home and want to stay up all night.

One of the choices I faced when I began *Matinee* was "How much fun are we going to make of this kind of movie? Are we going to do the bad special effects joke where you can see the strings and the wires and go 'Ho ho ho, look how primitive all this was and aren't we clever now?'" I elected not to do it that way, and the technical effects of the giant insect in the film-within-the-film are actually pretty good. I felt that to do it any other way would make the characters seem stupid – because, like me, the kids in *Matinee* love these movies. Not because of the tackiness of the special effects, but because they made it look like a giant ant crawling down the street, and that was cool.

*I was mesmerised by the special effects in 'The Howling' and conscious of never having seen such effects before.*

The effectiveness of the special effects was certainly why *The Howling* was a success, but it's not why it's a good picture. I have done, and would still do, projects with cutting-edge special effects. But I think that in the decade since *The Howling*, what's happened is that the search for spectacle has become the *raison d'être* of a movie. It was proved by all the bladder-faced movies that came out after *The Howling* that effects alone weren't enough. Special effects soon pale, and if nothing else is going on, then the movies just aren't interesting. You can't go back to them again. For me, the test of a good movie is: "Would I want to see it again?" A lot of the horror movies made in the last decade don't fulfil that criterion.

*Do you think gore cinema has peaked?*

I'm not a gore fan. My favourite horror film is *The Innocents* (1961), in which almost nothing happens, but which has a pervasive atmosphere which I find chilling. And of course the whole idea of madness is great: what's going on in the mind of the character is more scary than anything that's really happening to her. I don't think popped eyeballs are the ultimate in artistically scaring people. I think the things that really scare people are a lot more basic and interior than the fear of seeing somebody get their eyeballs popped. *How do you feel about 'Braindead'?*

I think it's the ultimate in that area. I don't know where the appeal would be in doing any more of that kind of film because Peter Jackson has taken it to the hilarious extreme it deserves. I remember when Mario Bava started the trend in pictures like *Twitch of the Death Nerve* (1971), which was an amazing film. Bava used to film death so lovingly that you felt morbid just coming out of the theatre. But I never saw those things done any better, and that's the problem. They'll continue to make splatter films, but to me they've become irrelevant.

*What is relevant now?*

It would be glib of me to say that the future of horror films should be areas no one has explored before... it's easy to say, but not to do. Looking through the literature of the past, very little has been explored: there's certainly been very little Lovecraft on film, and what has been done hasn't done him much justice. Poe is probably going to come back, partly because he's now in the public domain. There has been a spate of low-budget Poes, and they all seem to have been made by Roger Corman. He's remaking his whole back catalogue! I'm not sure that Poe doesn't need a new translator – I love the pictures Roger made, but that's part of the past now.

*'Matinee' opens on 18 June and is reviewed on page 59 of this issue*

## Joe Dante

Born 28 November 1947, New Jersey

### As feature film director

#### Hollywood Boulevard

Co-director (1975) 83 minutes

#### Piranha

Steven Spielberg deemed Dante's first directorial solo the best of the *Jaws* rip-offs, establishing an important professional alliance for the young film-maker. In 1981, a US/Italian sequel entitled *Piranha II: The Spawning* was produced – directed by another New World alumnus: James Cameron.

#### The Howling

(1980) 91 minutes

#### Twilight Zone the Movie

Co-director (1983) 102 minutes

Dante directed the 'It's a Good Life' segment.

#### Gremlins

(1984) 111 minutes  
The fellow in the dark glasses and long sleeves glimpsed during the Inventors' Convention sequence is not Dante himself, but a lookalike. Several years after the theatrical release, *Gremlins* debuted on NBC-TV with an additional scene that explained Judge Reinhold's disappearance from the picture. Zach Galligan and Phoebe Cates seek shelter in the town bank, only to find Reinhold's character cowering from the gremlin invasion inside one of the vaults. Now thoroughly demented, he describes witnessing the death of bank manager Edward Andrews, and then gloats over how this incident is going to benefit his own future. Zach and Phoebe close the heavy vault door and spin the lock. Dante reportedly offered an additional 50 minutes of out-takes to NBC-TV for this broadcast, but was turned down.

#### Explorers

(1985) 109 minutes  
Dante was contractually forced to have *Explorers* in theatres by a certain date, and the film was ultimately rushed into release without really being finished. When the time came for the home video release, Dante re-edited the film to 107 minutes, removing three scenes and refilming portions of the penultimate classroom dream. Oddly, the theatrical version is the one most frequently shown on television, and the best of the two variants seems to be a home-made combination of both.

#### Amazon Women on the Moon

Co-director (1986) 85 minutes  
This semi-sequel to John Landis' *The Kentucky Fried Movie* (1977) finds Dante directing comedy sketches with producer Landis, Carl Gottlieb and Robert K. Weiss. With the exception of the broadly funny 'Bullshit or Not?' (a parody of phenomenological TV shows starring Henry Silva), Dante's segments tend to be darker and more confrontational than humour has been since the demise of Lenny Bruce. One entire segment directed by Dante – 'French Ventriloquist's Dummy' starring Dick Miller – was deleted from the final cut ("Landis didn't think it was funny," Dante explains) but has been restored to the expanded (94 minutes) prints now shown on American television.

#### Innerspace

(1987) 120 minutes

#### The 'burbs

(1988) 103 minutes  
Made during the Writers Guild strike of 1988, three different endings to this suburban nightmare were concocted on



set. Dante disapproves of the one that's in the movie, which was preferred by preview audiences. In Dante's favourite, Tom Hanks' creepy neighbours are caught with garbagemen Dick Miller and Robert Picardo bound and gagged in the trunk of their car.

#### **Gremlins 2: The New Batch**

Director/actor (1990) 106 minutes  
Knowing that G2's 'Gremlins Take Over the Projection Booth' sequence wouldn't work on home video as well as it had in theatres, Dante was given "a little money, very little" to film a replacement 'Gremlins in the VCR' sequence for the Warner Home Video cassette release. This post-production sequence – which finds the mischievous monsters switching channels and finding gremlins participating in everything from Westerns to commercials – was filmed in early 1991.

The original theatrical sequence survives, however, in the laser disc edition because, Dante says, "laser disc consumers are into letterboxing and are basically interested in recreating the theatrical experience at home." Dante appears briefly as a television director.

#### **Matinee** (1993) 99 minutes

Part of this assignment was to direct *Mant*, Lawrence Woolsey's stylishly silly film-within-the-film. ("Mant was directed by Lawrence Woolsey, not me," Dante protests.) The entire *Mant* feature (20 minutes) and its trailer will be included on Warner Home Video's letterboxed laser disc edition of *Matinee*, released in the US on 30 June. "Believe it or not, somebody actually approached me with an offer to finish *Mant* and put it out as a full-length feature," Dante reveals. "But I'm not sure that's what I should be doing at this point in my career."

#### **Other work**

#### **The Movie Orgy** Editor/conceptualist (1967-75) 7 hours

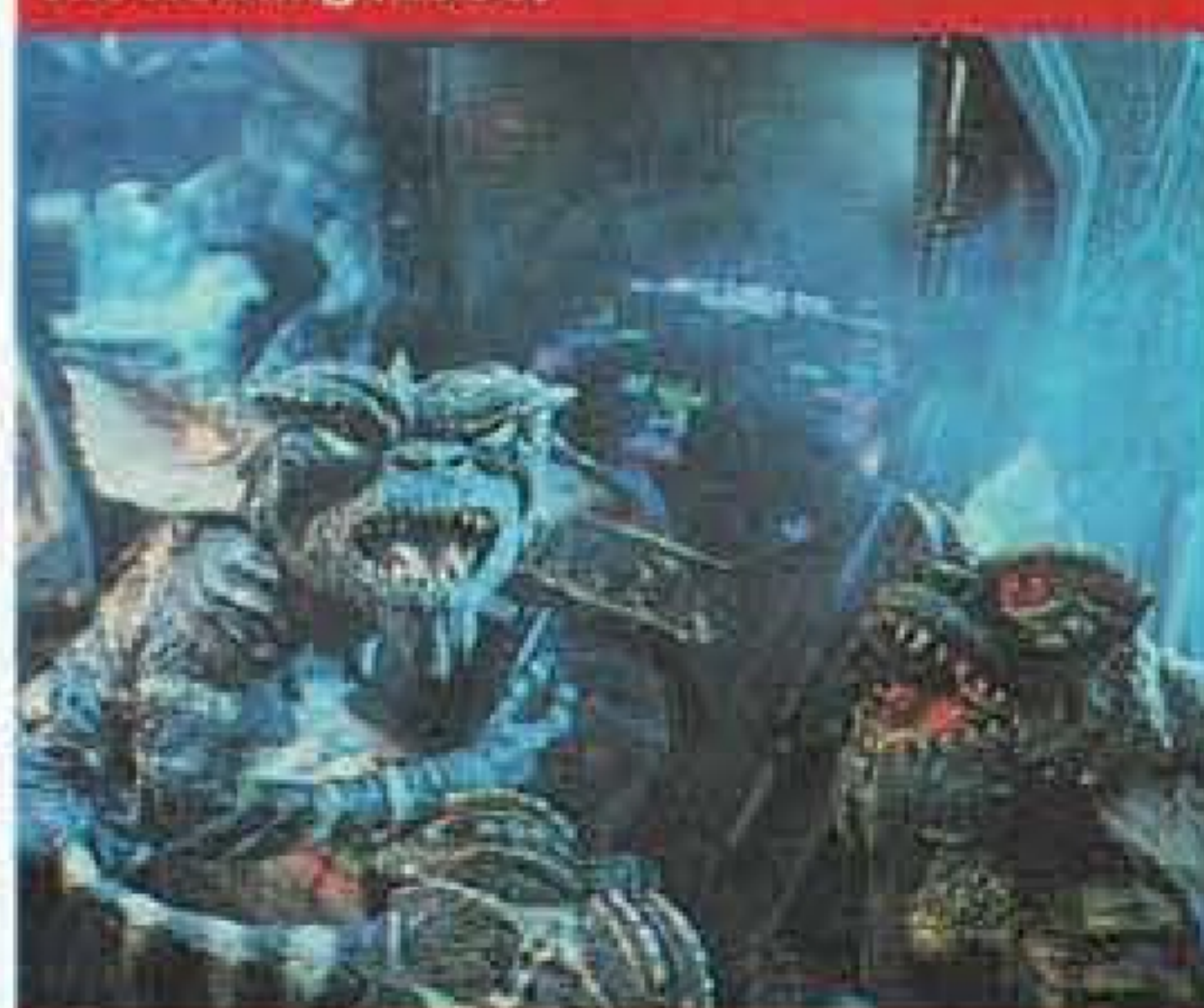
The idea for this was born when Dante and Jon Davison noticed that Morris Ankrum played an Air Force General in more than a few science-fiction classics of the 50s. The two then cobbled together lengths of footage from rented 16mm prints ("We didn't have the rights to any of this stuff," Dante says) with public domain clips from *The Phantom Creeps*, Art Linkletter kinescopes and television commercials to create a mad and strangely linear montage. *The Movie Orgy* became a *cause célèbre* on college campuses and at repertory cinemas and was eventually sponsored by Schlitz beer. Audiences never knew what they were going to get, as the *Orgy* was in a constant state of evolution, discarding old sequences in favour of new, equally fortuitous discoveries. "It hasn't been shown for many years, but I have one of its many forms somewhere in my vaults," Dante says. "In fact, a piece of it shows up on television in *Matinee*."

#### **Street Girls** Actor (1975)

Dante does not appear in this lewd, low-budget, New World acquisition, but he figures prominently in the movie's still sets. Dante explains: "*Street Girls* was cheap even by Roger's standards; it was filmed up in Seattle and was really ugly-looking, production-wise just a notch above a porn movie. There was no way to pull any enticing shots out of the picture, so Miller



**The Howling (1980)**



**Gremlins (1984)**



**Explorers (1985)**



**The 'burbs (1989)**



**Eerie, Indiana (1991)**

Drake and I decided to take the star of the movie – along with some other girls – for a walk down Sunset, passing a camera around and taking stills of ourselves. I have a great picture of myself being threatened at knife-point by this buxom street girl!"

#### **Cannonball** Actor (1976)

In tribute to his role as New World's "Mr. Fix-It", Dante plays a bit part as a mechanic in this witty David Carradine action picture directed by Paul Bartel.

#### **Grand Theft Auto** Editor (1977)

**I Never Promised You a Rose Garden**  
Additional editing, uncredited (1977)

#### **Fast Charlie, The Moonbeam Rider**

Additional editing, uncredited (1978)

#### **Rock 'n' Roll High School**

Story/co-director, uncredited (1979)

When director Alan Arkush suffered a collapse from nervous exhaustion, Dante was recruited to direct the last three to four days of shooting, including the buoyantly choreographed gymnasium sequence, in which Riff Randell sings the title song. Dante also supervised the film's final editing, and is given "Special Thanks".

#### **Screamers** Editor, uncredited (1981)

Sergio Martino's Italian horror picture *L'isola degli uomini pesce* (1978) required some post-production doctoring before New World would release it to American drive-ins. Miller Drake was assigned to direct a replacement first reel, as well as some insert shots of a superior "fishman" make-up. Dante re-edited Drake's and Martino's footage into a workable composite.

#### **Police Squad!** ABC-TV, director (1982)

23 minutes each

Dante directed 'Ring of Fear' and 'Testimony of Evil', two of only six episodes filmed for this Zucker-Abrahams-Zucker cult series, later reborn as *The Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad* (1988) and *The Naked Gun 2: The Smell of Fear* (1991). It was Dante's work on these episodes that finally got him accepted into the Directors Guild of America.

#### **Amazing Stories**

NBC-TV, director (1985) 23 minutes

'Boo!' (broadcast 16 February 1986) is about the discomfort felt by the ghosts of a Vaudevillian husband-and-wife team (Eddie Bracken and Evelyn Keyes) when the perfect married couple (Bruce Davison and Andrea Marcovicci) move out and a couple of zany pornographers (Robert Picardo and Wendy Schaal) move in. Bracken and Keyes decide to haunt the unlikeable new owners out of their happy home. Written by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, the episode bears more than a passing resemblance to *Beetlejuice* (1988), a script Dante turned down.

#### **The Twilight Zone**

CBS-TV, director (1985) 19 minutes

'The Shadow Man' (broadcast 30 November 1985), written by Rockne S. O'Bannon, features Jonathan Ward as an introverted 13-year-old honour student with bully trouble (courtesy of *Explorers'* Jason Presson) and a morbid fear of the dark. Visually indebted to Mario Bava's *Baron Blood* (1971), the short sketches a surprisingly complex portrait in its brief running time.

#### **Amazing Stories**

NBC-TV, director (1986) 23 minutes

'The Greibble' (broadcast 4 November 1985) stars Hayley Mills as a fretful, modern mom who throws out her over-

imaginative son's comic books (drawn by Dante!) – only to be tormented by the Seuss-like creature in one of them. "It's not the most distinguished moment in my filmography," Dante protests, but it's actually a pleasant romp with a memorably loopy creature, designed and articulated by special make-up effects wizard Rob Bottin.

#### **Oscar** Actor (1991)

Dante's cameo appearance in this Sylvester Stallone vehicle was cut by director John Landis before the film's ill-fated release. Dante recalls: "I appeared in two scenes as 'The Wrong Man', an innocent guy who Stallone's henchmen confuse with somebody else. I did my scene on the day the Universal backlot burned down, so there was actually quite a hiatus between my two scenes. I'm still billed in the movie as 'Face on the Cutting Room Floor'."

#### **Eerie, Indiana** NBC-TV director/creative consultant/actor (1991)

23 minutes per episode

Dante directed five stories for this highly inventive tailor-made series about an adolescent boy (Omri Katz) whose family relocates to a peculiar town in the Midwestern United States. Dante's projects were the pilot episode, 'The Retainer', 'The Losers', 'Heart on a Chain' (a bittersweet romantic episode that Dante counts as his personal favourite) and 'The Hole in the Head Gang'. Dante also played himself in the wonderful farewell episode, 'Reality Takes a Holiday', in which Katz realises that his family and friends are actually a bunch of actors, that his house is a set with sliding walls, and that he is being written out of the series.

#### **Sleepwalkers** Actor (1992)

Dante is one of several horror directors (along with George A. Romero, Clive Barker and Tobe Hooper) who agreed to a small cameo appearance in this uninspired Stephen King adaptation. Director Mick (Crittters 2) Garis appears briefly near the end of *The Howling*, for which he also acted as publicist.

#### **The Silence of the Hams** Actor (1993)

Dante agreed to yet another cameo appearance in this Julie Corman production, scheduled for summer 1993 release. He appears in a scene with director John Carpenter as a man dying on a Los Angeles street filthy with chewing gum.

Dante is also credited as editor of Steve Carver's *The Arena* (1973), a US/Italian co-production distributed by New World – a misconception he is eager to correct. "I had nothing to do with editing *The Arena*," Dante insists. "Jon Davison was told to dream up a bunch of phoney Anglo names to replace the original Italian credits, and he thought it would be funny to put my name in there. The real editor's name was Giuseppe something-or-other, and that gave him the idea. Steve Carver was the real director, though."

Lastly, Dante completists should bear in mind the New World-era films of Joe's friend Jonathan Kaplan. In Kaplan's *Night Call Nurses* (1972) an elaborate Joe Dante story is related by Dennis Dugan (later a featured player in *The Howling*), and in *White Line Fever* (1975) Don Porter is about to tee off when he remembers an appointment with Dante and promptly cancels his golf game.

Compiled by Tim Lucas



Is the horror genre now exhausted? Mark Kermode talks to some of its creators

# GHOUL SCHOOL

## Clive Barker

Novelist/director/screenwriter/painter. Barker made his mark as a writer of horror fiction with *The Books of Blood*, a collection of short stories which explored and celebrated monstrous multiplicity and sexual perversity. Labelled by Stephen King as "the future of horror", Barker turned to cinema in the mid 80s, directing *Hellraiser* (1987) and *Nightbreed* (1990) and (co-)executive producing *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* (1988), *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* (1992) and *Candyman* (1992), all inspired by his writings. His paintings are currently on exhibition in New York.

### On the nature of horror cinema

The horror movie deals with the proximity of the audience to manifestations of mental and physical pain. We watch, like the spectators at the Coliseum would have watched, people in *extremis* – that's the theory. On the one hand we will see Janet Leigh stabbed to death while naked in a shower in *Psycho*; in Lucio Fulci's *Zombie Flesh Eaters* we will see somebody dragged inch by inch towards a spike which will eventually put out their eye. Then at the other end of the spectrum we will see Bette Davis torment the housebound Joan Crawford in *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?* or in *Bad Lieutenant* – very much a horror movie – we will see a man's disintegration because of the mental torment he induces for himself. It seems to me that these twin poles of the horror movie – visceral special effects pain and psychological pain – remain intact. There are good, commercially successful examples of both genres out there, and occasionally in a film like *Silence of the Lambs* genres are married.

### On gore

The issue gore raises is one of explicitness. You can be exposed to any number of prosthetic guts and be completely unaffected. Yet you can find an intimate moment of drama in which you believe totally, which contains only a tiny piece of special effects, and you have to leave the cinema because it touches something within you. It isn't a question of expanding perimeters – it's a question of what a certain act *means* within a drama. The blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear* remains one of the theatre's most distressing images after 400

years because of what it *means*. Sometimes recently it has seemed as if the tail has wagged the dog – the special effects have been distractions from the ineptitude of the performances or the lack of thematic substance.

### On horror painting

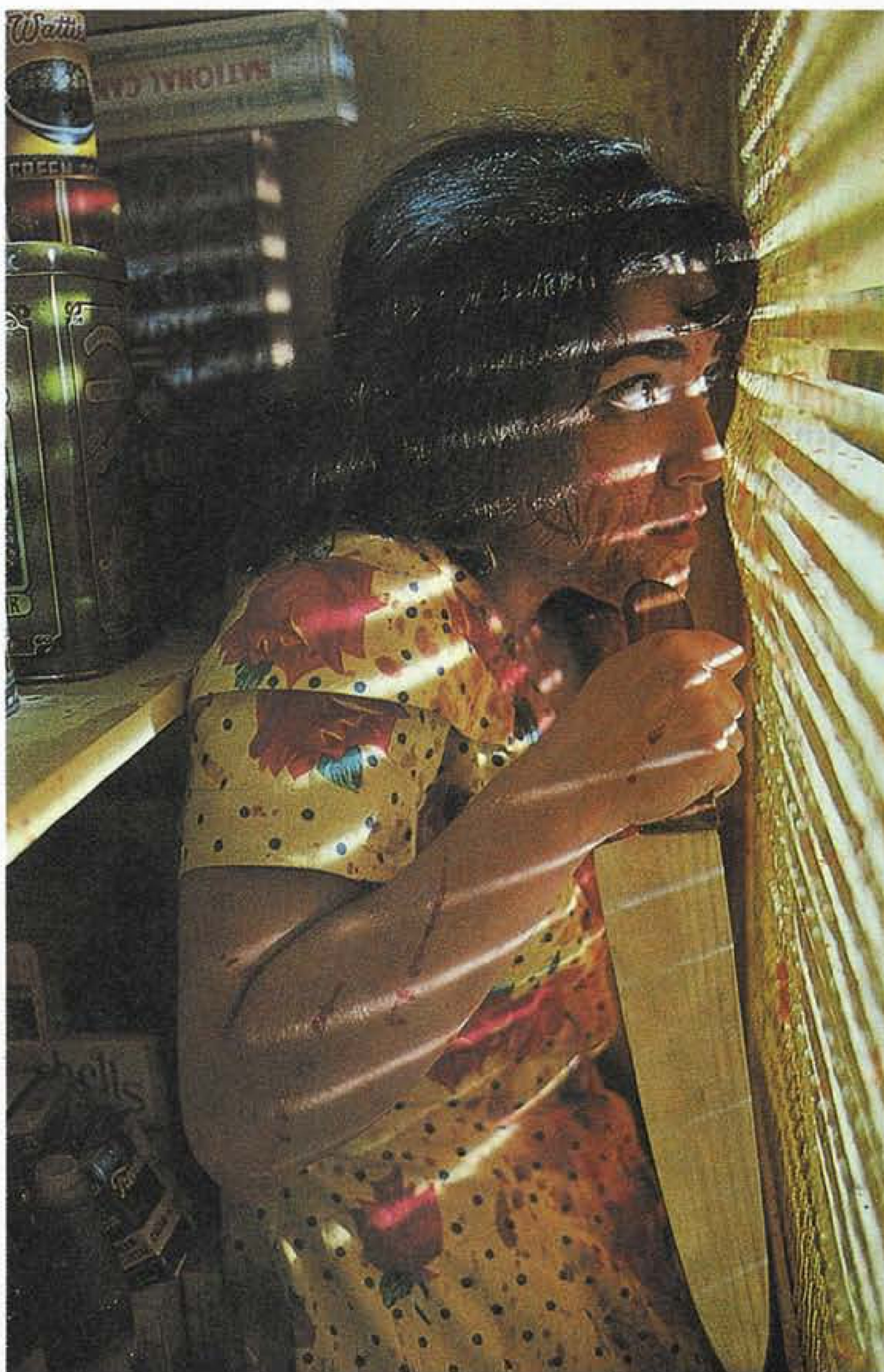
The dreamscapes of Max Ernst or Dali, which are full of strange mutations of flesh, put on canvas what David Cronenberg put on screen. The only difference is that Ernst and Dali did it 50 years earlier. Images we now associate with horror films – bodies melting, oozing, opening out – have been in the painterly tradition for many years. You could go back to Bosch to see the body reconfigured in that way. What Cronenberg did brilliantly was to acknowledge that these were about psychic conditions and to find narratives to express them. There's more of a continuum between painting and the work of special effects artist Rick Baker, who worked on *The Exorcist* and *The Howling*, than between Baker and what happened in movies of the 40s and 50s. I feel that 'weird' often segues into horror without their being much of a gap. When people in the mainstream think of anything off the beaten track or weird, their reaction is to believe that this is meant to be horrific. Obviously I don't feel that way myself, and I enjoy exploring the attraction of those areas.

## Ramsey Campbell

Novelist. Described by Robert Hadji as "the finest living exponent of the British weird fiction tradition", Campbell is Britain's premiere horror novelist. His early short stories, collected in *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants* (1964), owe a debt to H. P. Lovecraft. Campbell came of age with *The Face That Must Die* (1979, revised 1983) and his subsequent novels have transposed the terrors of M. R. James, Robert Aickman and Arthur Machen into situations of modern urban collapse. His recent works include *Ancient Images* (1989), *The Count of Eleven* (1991) and *Waking Nightmares* (1992).

### On the power of tradition

It seems to me that the horror field has been in danger of losing touch with its own traditions. There has been a generation of readers and writers who have read nothing earlier than Steve King or Clive Barker. I think what's ripe for rediscovery are the traditions that led up to these writers: don't just read King, read Richard Matheson; don't just read Clive, read Arthur Machen, Clark Ashton Smith and so on. It does bother me that you can't buy a definitive Algernon Blackwood collection in Britain. Machen is pretty hard to get hold of, too. I'm delighted to see that we've just got the complete E. F. Benson ghost stories, but I wonder how well it will do. The path to rediscovery, of



The latter days: Peter Jackson's 'Braindead', with its outré humour, top; Clive Barker's 'Hellraiser', above

course, is the writers who draw on these traditions, for instance T.E.D. Klein, in whom you can see Arthur Machen, or Peter Ackroyd.

### On the state of horror fiction

If I wasn't editing *Best New Horror* I wouldn't read as much horror as I do. There's currently a whole bunch of writers who seem to be trying to outdo each other in being disgusting, which is a trend I'd like to see disappear up its own entrails. I think there's a relationship between a current trend in prose fiction and in films, where people are trying to outdo each other in gore. One thing we've seen happen in the past is for the industry to react against itself. So suddenly you get a Val Lewton, who thought the old Universal make-ups were too explicit. I think it's entirely possible that we could see that sort of reaction again. Two or three years ago I was at one of the annual all-night gore-fests, where the audience was doing the usual thing of cheering every time somebody's head exploded or entrails started to spill out. Then half way through we got *The Vanishing*, which initially elicited groans because it was subtitled. But then they settled down, and when we got to the point where it becomes apparent what has really been going on, somebody who'd



been sitting cheering away at all the blood said "I can't cope with this!" and ran out. Which made me think that less is still more.

## Wes Craven

Director/screenwriter. After a startling first foray into horror with a brutal low-budget tale of the corrupting power of violence, *The Last House on the Left* (1972), Craven cemented his reputation as a rising horror auteur with *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) and *Deadly Blessing* (1981) before coming to popular prominence with the creation of dream-demon Freddy Krueger in the groundbreaking *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Krueger subsequently starred in a number of sequels of varying quality, of which only *A Nightmare on Elm Street Part 3: Dream Warriors* (1987) enjoyed Craven's involvement. He is currently working on *Part 7*, which he intends both to write and direct.

### On screen viscera

There was an initial stage in horror cinema, during which *The Last House on the Left* was made, where gore stood for everything that was hidden in society. Guts stood for issues that were being repressed, so the sight of a body being eviscerated was exhilarating to an audience because they felt: "Thank god it's finally out in the open and slopping around on the floor." But that gets old very fast, and the danger is that the audience could start to get off on the gore and effects themselves, and then very shortly could start to get off on the equivalent of extreme violence to human beings.

If you look at my films, it's the intensity rather than anything explicit that makes people feel they're seeing a lot of gore. In *The Last House on the Left* the disembowelling to which everyone refers isn't actually all that gory, but it is intense. On the other hand, recently I walked out of a screening of *Reservoir Dogs* because I felt at a certain point that the film-maker was just getting off on the violence and that it was being treated as something amusing, which it isn't to me.

## Dario Argento

Director/producer/screenwriter/composer. The father of modern Italian horror cinema. Argento's early works (*L'Uccello dalle piume di cristallo/The Bird With the Crystal Plumage*, 1969, and *Quattro mosche di velluto grigio/Four Flies on Grey Velvet*, 1971) drew comparisons with Hitchcock and Mario Bava, but the style of later works such as *Profondo rosso/Deep Red* (1975) and *Inferno* (1980) is uniquely his own. A vociferous opponent of censorship, Argento has recently completed work on his latest film, *Trauma*, starring Piper Laurie.

### On moral panics

I think it's terrible that this panic about screen violence has started up again. I waited so long for the new

freedom in Europe, and now Britain has retreated again. You'll never see any of my movies uncut now. *Trauma* is certified U in Italy. Children can see it. Sure, there are scenes of a child in jeopardy, and committing acts of violence, but this is the story! Did you see *Hardboiled*, where the baby is held in the arms of a man being shot at and gets splattered with blood? It's not so different.

### On Surrealism

I think special effects will definitely become more surrealistic. Until now, surrealism was hard to put on film. Heads, bodies, explosions – they're all too easy now. With computer graphics, dreams and nightmares can be realised. Your imagination will have no limit.

### On the resurgence of the classics

I don't think we're set for a revival of the old classics, though I know some people do. I hated Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* – it was terrible. Who cares about *The Mummy* or *Frankenstein*? Didn't Clive Barker plan to do *The Mummy* a few years ago? What happened to that will probably happen to all the other planned remakes – it's the fashion after *Dracula* to announce new versions. But who's interested? Not me.

## Michele Soavi

Director/screenwriter. Soavi starred in a number of low-budget exploitation movies before working as assistant director (and actor) for Dario Argento. In 1987 he handled second-unit shooting on Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* and directed his first feature *Stagefright – Aquarius* (aka *Deliria*). His films *La Chiesa* (*The Church*, 1988) and *La Setta* (*The Sect*, 1991) established him as the prince of Italian horror. He is currently working on *Dellamorte Dellamore*, based on the novel by Tiziano Sclavi.

### On horror's schizophrenia

There's a big split within the genre. You have 'soft' horror movies for children, like Sam Raimi's *Army of Darkness*, and violent horror with a more realistic base like *Reservoir Dogs*. It seems audiences can't take full fantasy horror seriously any more. And we have to make what the audience wants to see.

I think horror will become more discreet because we've seen it all. I'll be pulling back on the horror in *Dellamorte Dellamore* – it's on the knife-edge between horror and comedy, with a great deal of irony. I think you have to add new ingredients to set your movie apart. *Army of Darkness* was ironical because audiences wanted it to be. You can't ignore a request from the audience.

### On special effects

Special effects are a trap. I use them only when I can't do a scene any other way. I tend to sprinkle them around like gold-dust. With the rise of new

technology, you can't even see where the trick begins. I'm not sure I like that. It's a big moral issue with me. If you concentrate on getting the story right, you don't need effects: Hitchcock hardly ever used them. The accent on effects in the past decade has been a mistake. They make you lazy, and audiences know too much about them.

## Mariano Baino

Director/screenwriter. Born in Italy and raised on the traditions of Bava and Argento, Baino moved to Britain where he directed the short cannibalistic fantasy *Caruncula* (1990). He is currently editing his first feature, *The Dark Waters*, a gothic horror film co-financed by Italian and Russian investment and filmed on location in the Ukraine.

### On horror comedies

One of the main reasons horror has been so jokey lately is that the genre attracts a lot of film-makers who are doing it because they think it's easy. But they don't take it seriously, and all the time they're trying to tell the audience: "This is beneath me."

The other factor is that from a Hollywood point of view, if you put humour into a horror film, you defuse any disturbing elements. Then you make it more 'universal', so everyone can watch it. The studios think that making a horror film comical will make it acceptable for younger audiences. But for me, this is like a comedy without the jokes. What's the point? A horror film has to be frightening.

### On America vs Europe

Part of the American way is to flatten things down so that everything in the cinema looks the same, which really doesn't fit very well with the horror genre. Horror should have a strong element of weirdness.

In Europe, in the countries where there's still a healthy film industry, you have a problem if the films aren't made in English. To achieve any degree of success, you have to crack the American market, and that means English dialogue. Britain is currently best placed to make European horror films that succeed internationally, but Britain has decided that genre films are not worth making. And I think that's one of the main reasons why there isn't any industry here.

## Katt Shea (aka Katt Shea Ruben)

Director/screenwriter. A former actress, Shea apprenticed as a film-maker with Roger Corman, becoming one of the few women directors working in the horror/exploitation genre. *Stripped to Kill* (1987) and *Dance of the Damned* (1989) established her as a controversial underground talent. In 1991-92 she directed *Poison Ivy*, an intense psychological thriller starring Drew Barrymore which drew



Dark times:  
Mariano Baino's  
'The Dark Waters',  
top; Wes Craven's  
'Nightmare on Elm  
Street', centre;  
Dario Argento's  
'Inferno', bottom



◀ mainstream critical applause. She is currently making a vampire show for MTV entitled *Dracworld*.

#### On television

It'll be interesting to see how far we can go on television – the series is definitely horror, it's sexy and it does have a certain amount of violence. I'd like to go as far as I can with the sexuality, but I think the killings will be more symbolic.

I don't think it's true that today television and video have become the predominant media for the horror genre. All that needs to happen is for a horror movie to make some money for a studio, and then they'll start thinking about making horror movies again. That's how it always works: *Home Alone* makes money, so they want to make 50 *Home Alone* clones.

Unfortunately, if a classic horror movie with a lot of depth comes along, the studios probably wouldn't recognise the depth and will just want to make more horror movies, however shallow.

#### On vampires

The problem with vampire stories is that there have been so many, and a lot of them have been really *bad* – very superficial and disappointing. I think we have something interesting with the MTV show because we're going back to a classic approach – we're not trying to get by on special effects, but on story. In the show, the whole world has become a vampire world called *Dracworld*, which is very moody and artistic. Traffic lights have become decorations, foliage grows wild, and everything else is a work of art. The

few surviving humans are used to provide blood for the vampire's coffee houses. The series centres on a guy who's trying to take the world back for humans, and the point is that the world could be a better place because there's no one left who knows how to make nuclear bombs and so on. The guy becomes a famous vampire killer, and in the first episode it is revealed that his teenage love is now a vampire charged with hunting him down. So throughout the series, these two characters are lovers who can never be together.

#### On depth of character

In the end the MTV show is not about people fighting vampires, but about individuals dealing with their lot. I think the problem with horror recently is that it became very

shocking because directors thought that was what audiences wanted. But horror movies have been around for a long time, and have been wonderful, symbolic stories about lives which have gone awry: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920/1932/1941) were stories about loneliness and desperation. And recently that's got lost, due in part to state-of-the-art special effects.

For me, the key to what horror movies had then, and what they have recently lost, is characterisation. The last good horror movie for me was *The Fly* (1986), because the characters were not clichéd. Recently the characters seem to have existed just to get killed, and that doesn't suck you in the way a movie about personalities can.

Thanks to Alan Jones for the interviews with Dario Argento and Michele Soavi

Lizzie Francke believes that we have looked too many horrors in the eye – and that horror's motto ought to be “less is more”

## SEEING IN THE DARK

● I don't subscribe to the horror fanzine *Fangoria*. I don't know the names of the special effects guys on *Hellraiser III*, nor do I monitor the vintage of the buckets of blood. All that, however, doesn't make me any less interested in the horror film, for which I have always had a fearful affection. Call me a furtive fellow-traveller on the nightmare ride, if you like. But one that feels increasingly short-changed. And it's not just that I'm not scared any more.

Of all genres, horror film has had the hardest time critically, often treated by the mainstream press as the runt of the litter and massacred accordingly. It has been the specialists who have worked to give the genre credibility, whether they be the buffish and mostly boy aficionados who hover around the Scala cinema for Dario Argento all-nighters or the academics who run courses on vampirism and the *fin de siècle*. Since I don't belong officially to either club, I feel somewhat nervous about grappling with the subject. There is a certain tyranny in horror's history which affects critics and film-makers alike. Indeed, horror specialist Kim Newman argued in last November's *Sight and Sound* that the pleasures of the modern horror film lie in an unholy communion of knowingness that requires the congregation's acknowledgment of horror's past.

Newman pointed in particular to Tom Savini's recent remake of George A. Romero's 1968 classic *Night of the Living Dead* as an instance of a film whose nuances could be fully appreciated only by those with a knowledge of the original. Indeed, the film kicks off with the protagonist, referring to a visit to her mother's grave, asking: “Why do we have to put ourselves through this charade?” It is the knowing point of entry to *Night of the Living Dead*, at which the audience straps itself in for the bumpy ride.

Later a broadcaster announces: “This is something that nobody has ever heard about or seen before.” But, of course, the audience should be familiar with it all. It's the predicament that governs the modern horror film.

Too much familiarity can breed contempt. If the horror film resembles a camp, ritualistic pantomime with well-rehearsed plots and ploys, it ceases to upset. A central problem is that whether they be vampires, zombies or itinerant psychos, the Freddys, Michael Myers and Leatherfaces – the bogeymen who stalk cinema's nightmares – have been unmasked over and over again and we've had too many opportunities to look them in the eye. We know how the monster's gory make-up is applied, and also what he or she stands for metaphorically as the film's bloated subtext floats to the surface. To coin film theorist Robin Wood's phrase in his seminal essay on horror films of the 60s and 70s, we've seen *The Return of the Repressed* and *The Return of the Sons and Daughters of the Repressed* return once too often. Representing a host of anxieties to do with those taboo areas of sexuality, race and class, the monster who once erupted in the dark with shocking effect might as well walk boldly in broad daylight.

Whereas it was once only the critics who read psychoanalytic film theory, now the savvy film-makers do too. In his hack's guide to the genre, Hollywood script meister Robert McKee glibly throws in Freudian key words such as the “super uncanny” to explain how a director can manufacture terror in his or her film. For all their self-consciousness, films as diverse as *Candyman*, Bernard Rose's play on contemporary urban myths, and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Francis Ford Coppola's adaptation of the vampire classic, might as well have come with footnotes as a litany of readily identifiable fears are inscribed upon them. In *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Coppola deals with the fact that the story has been bled dry by returning to Stoker's original and directing it like an anxious undergraduate of Gothic Studies keen to display all the novel's buried preoccupations with sexuality, orientalism, disease, modernity, and so on.

If the dominant symptom of the horror film was once psychoanalysed as “the return of the repressed”, it now finds itself manifest as a neu-

rotically compulsive and deadly repetition. With nothing left to anticipate, is not its terrible power diminished? Traditionally the genre has been valued because of its ability to create unsafe places where inchoate feelings festered and were expressed in snatches of semi-heard whispers. It is that state of dream-like confusion that I long for when I go to a horror movie. I'd like to be led back into those chiaroscuro shadows again. Something producer Val Lewton knew how to do only too well.

Lewton's films, made in the 40s, knew what they were about. *Cat People* (1943) even introduces a psychologist who gives his reading of the case (only to get a mauling in the end). But still the film makes the fur on the back of my neck bristle as I'm drawn into the players' troubled states of mind. Leaving the question of whether or not heroine Irena is turning into a panther eerily ambiguous, the film knows how to disturb with the merest rustle of leaves.

This is horror at its most minimalist, but also at its most democratic, since it requires the audience to let loose their own imaginations rather than genuflecting to another's. The climactic swimming pool scene is a dazzling case in point. As Irena's friend Alice takes a dip in the dark, she grows more convinced that something is prowling out there. Stealthily paced, the camera shifts its attentions back and forth between Alice's startled face and the shadow-draped water's surface until finally the audience is pushed into the deep end only to surface as bewildered as the characters themselves. Of course, the implied connection between our feline friends and a ‘repressed’ female sexuality may seem hilariously obvious today. But *Cat People* is in every other way a subtle film that can still creep up on you.

To expose the raw nerve of my complaint, I would like to see more horror films that evoke an emotionally visceral experience rather than just an intellectual or physical one, films that hit the heart rather than just the head and stomach. For if horror films are to be engaged in a knowing ritual, why not make this one that tips to the tragic and plunges its followers into the deep end. Without the possibility of a cathartic experience, why would we want to put ourselves through the charade?



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● In a modest two-storey house on what was once a quiet street in the Parisian suburb of Boulogne lives a man named Alekan who is one of France's greatest and longest-practising magicians. Henri Alekan's career spans more than four decades and is book-ended by two of the most visually recognisable films in the history of cinema: Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête*, shot in Nazi-occupied Paris, and Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*, filmed in the about-to-be-dewalled Berlin in 1986, when Alekan was 77 years old.

Between these two hallmark films, Alekan has plied his visual sorcery on 66 other features, a number of them masterworks from cinema's most venerated auteurs. He shot René Clément's *La Bataille du rail*, Jean-Pierre



Melville's *Quand tu liras cette lettre*, William Wyler's *Roman Holiday* and Abel Gance's *Austerlitz*. He was cinematographer on three films for Marcel Carné, another three for Joseph Losey, and half a dozen for Terence Young. He filmed *Topkapi* for Jules Dassin, *La Territoire* for Raúl Ruiz, and Julien Duvivier's 1947 version of *Anna Karenina*, which remains, with *La Belle et la bête* and *Wings of Desire*, a personal favourite.

It was while Alekan was working on *La Territoire* that he met Wenders. The German director was ostensibly on vacation – though from all accounts the workaholic Wenders doesn't know the meaning of the word: for him, a vacation is merely a film waiting to happen that hasn't yet revealed itself – and still licking his wounds from having his one Hollywood film, *Hammett*, stolen from him and then eviscerated by the producer, Francis Ford Coppola. Enlisting Alekan on the spot, Wenders shot his *cinéma à clef* of the *Hammett*/Coppola affair – a film called *The State of Things* – in six weeks. Wenders and Alekan have been working together ever since. But in Wenders' new film, *Far Away So Close*, premiered in Cannes, Alekan is working in a different capacity. Stepping from behind the camera to a role in front of it, *Far Away So Close* marks Alekan's debut as an actor, at age 84.

**Richard Trainor:** How did you meet Wim Wenders and how did you come to work with him on *The State of Things*?

**Henri Alekan:** I was shooting *La Territoire* in Portugal with Raúl Ruiz in 1981 and Wenders was staying at the old hotel with the cracked swimming pool that you see in the film. We were ►

Alekan has shot films by Cocteau, Wyler and Wenders. He talks with Richard Trainor

## HENRI ALEKAN BLACK AND WHITE LIGHT





From here to eternity:  
Solveig Dommartin in  
Wenders' 'Wings of Desire'  
Opposite: Josette Day in  
Cocteau's 'La Belle et la bête'





◀ introduced by Isabelle Weingarten, the French actor who was Wim's girlfriend at the time and whom I knew from Paris. Wim told me: "I'd like to make a film here." He didn't have a script, or even a clear idea of what this film would be about, he just wanted to make a film in this location. Anyway, he said to me: "Alekan, if I can find the financing to make this film, I would like you to shoot it." And a couple of days later he flew off to Hollywood to look for the money, very much like the director character in the film. When he returned about a week later he had the money and hired the entire crew from the Ruiz picture. This was my introduction to Wim Wenders.

*Is that typical of Wenders and the way he works?*

Wenders relies on intuition and spontaneity more than many of the directors I've worked with. He'll arrive with the sketch of a film – often just a few lines describing the scene, sometimes a scene or two that's entirely scripted, but not much. The film begins to happen when he gets on the set. He likes to allow a lot of improvisation and he relies very much on the chemistry between his actors. Marcel Carné and Abel Gance would have everything scripted and plotted out, all the camera movements and angles and the blocking of the actors. Neither wanted the actors to make suggestions. They kept strict discipline on the set. *Do you enjoy this improvisational style of Wenders, or is it more difficult for you as a cameraman?*

Both. On the one hand, it's very exciting to be in a situation where such spontaneity of creation occurs because you're forced to improvise and it requires of you all the technical knowledge you have. But it can also be maddeningly difficult. For instance, the rock concert scene wasn't in the outline of *Wings of Desire* that Wim had prepared. He just decided on the spur of the moment to incorporate it, so I had to devise a very complex lighting scheme there and then on the set with the actors and musicians. It was very difficult, but I also enjoyed the challenge.

*Were you involved with 'Wings of Desire' from the planning stages? How much of the look of the film was entrusted to you?*

On *Wings of Desire* I was with Wenders from the start. He told me he wanted to make a film about angels set in Berlin, and his main question was, "How does one portray an angel? What would the angels look like?" When he asked me to shoot the film I was very interested – both visually and because of the story. We worked closely together on creating the look of the film and based the visual text on a wonderful documentary film about Berlin from the German Expressionist period, *Berlin: Symphony of a City* made by Walter Ruttmann in 1927. Wenders screened this film for the crew a number of times and we used it as our reference. Then Wenders said, "Alekan, you know what I want, now help me to create it." So as far as the look of that film was concerned, it was more a collaboration. But what Wenders gave me was total freedom to do my job.

*I'm particularly interested in two shots in 'Wings of Desire' and how you managed to create them. The first is the pan shot between the two buildings where the camera looks in at the buildings' residents.*

*The second is the scene at the circus where the angel Daniel (Bruno Ganz) is walking around in the dirt beneath Marion (Solveig Dommartin) while she's doing her trapeze act, yet he doesn't leave any footprints on the ground.*

I was very happy with both these shots. For the first we rigged up a bridge between the two buildings and then rigged up a chair that would slide back and forth on pulleys. It was a very delicate operation and a little dangerous since the chair was about 30 metres off the ground. I'm a little old for that kind of work, so my camera operator, Agnès Godard, was going to shoot it. But she had recently had an operation and we thought it might be too dangerous for her. Then Cochet, my chief assistant, was going to shoot it. Finally, just as we were getting ready, Wenders comes up and says, "No, I'll shoot it." So we strapped him into the chair and gave him the camera and he did it. That's typical of Wim: people tend to think of him as a director who is not particularly technically minded, but in fact he's quite capable. He's also fearless when he's making a film.

The second shot is an old photographic trick. We just had Bruno Ganz do the movements in reverse and then ran the film backwards and printed it that way so you wouldn't see the footprints. Not many people notice it, but it's an important piece of information. Angels don't leave footprints, which is why when Daniel becomes human the fact that he now leaves footprints amazes him; it's evidence of his transformation from one world to another.

*In 'Far Away So Close' your role is as an actor, not the cameraman. Did Wenders ask you to shoot the picture at first?*

We talked about it, but I wasn't sure if I had the energy or desire to shoot another film. Besides, he has a very fine chief operator in Jürgen Jürges. So I thought I would like to be on the other side of the camera for once – to find a nice comfortable chair between takes and sip a glass of wine and have a comfortable trailer to rest in. Wenders was kind enough to write a part for me and also one for Cochet.

*You studied at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers in Paris and then at the Institut d'Optiques. But at the same time you were also a puppeteer at the Buttes du Chaumont. Were you torn between these two professions?*

I adored the art of the marionettes and it was an old and respected profession. But I was also discovering my passion for cinema, in particular the Expressionist cinema coming out of Germany – the films of Pabst, Lang and Murnau – and the great Swedish and Danish cinema of the 20s. I couldn't do both, so I decided to cast my fate with cinema and became an assistant cameraman.

*In your book 'Des lumières et des ombres', you indicate that you were very influenced by the German cinematographer Eugen Shuftan. How did you meet him and what was your association like?*

We met here in Paris in 1933, which was the time of the great political and artistic exodus from Germany because of the rise of National Socialism. Many of the cultural refugees came here to Paris and among them was Shuftan. I worked as his chief assistant on two films for Carné – *Drôle de drame* and *Quai des brumes* – and

we became good friends. About 25 years ago – when I was thinking about writing my book – Shuftan told me he too was thinking of writing a book on the technical aspects of our craft. About 10 years later we talked again and Shuftan said: "Alekan, I'm about to start my book." I told him, "Well, Shuftan, I'm about to finish mine!"

*During the war you were the cinematographer on 'La Belle et la bête' and René Clément's 'La Bataille du rail', which consolidated your reputation as a master of the camera. Tell us about them.*

I felt very strongly about both films, but I didn't know how significant they were until later. They were very different: the Clément one was a documentary that called for a very naturalistic style of lighting and camerawork, while the Cocteau was a fantasy that called for a more romanticised and stylised type of photography. *You made those films during the Nazi occupation of Paris. How difficult was it to work then?*

Extremely difficult. First you had to shoot almost everything in the studio, and exclusively during the day because of the blackout restrictions. So the shots in *La Belle et la bête* that were supposed to be exteriors at night were sets built in the studio and meticulously lit. Then there were the shortages to deal with – not just film, which was carefully rationed, but food as well. You were only given ration tickets for 150 grams of meat per week, and we would often shoot all day with only a piece of bread or two to eat. The conditions were close to impossible. *And yet during this period we were given some of the finest films French cinema has yet produced. How do you account for this?*

I think an artist's best work comes out during hard times. Look at the great masterpieces that Rembrandt and Goya painted when their lives were most difficult. Human beings sometimes need great difficulties to draw out all they have within them. They force you to be resourceful, imaginative, truly creative. And they also arouse the spirit of co-operation.

*After your great success with Cocteau you never worked together again. Why?*

It's one of the great mysteries of my career. In truth, I can only speculate. Perhaps Cocteau felt that he had gone as far as he could in film with me and that he needed another camera operator to explore the limits of the subsequent films he wanted to make, some of which were quite good, but not, I think, in the same class as *La Belle et la bête*.

*Over the next 20 years, between 1943 and 1963, you worked with some of the most renowned directors in the history of film – William Wyler, Marcel Carné, Charlie Chaplin, Abel Gance, Joseph Losey. Could you tell us what working with some of them was like?*

I worked only briefly with Chaplin on *A King in New York*, so it was more of interest just to meet him than a collaboration.

I loved working with Wyler, a true professional and a great director whom I had long admired. *Roman Holiday* was my first experience as chief operator for an American director, so I didn't know what to expect. The first day of shooting, he walked up to me and said, "Alekan, I don't know a thing about camera technique or lighting, so I'm relying on you; you're in charge of that department." He was



I absolutely prefer black and white – for me, colour film doesn't exist, at least not yet. Colour is too realistic for my taste

Engines of pleasure: Henri Alekan, left, working on René Clément's *'La Bataille du rail'*



very laid back as a director and I liked him very much as a person.

With Carné, I don't have very good memories. He was very rigid in terms of the script and what he wanted from the cast and crew, and he was extremely nervous when he was on the set. Before he started a picture he could be quite pleasant. And he was usually pleasant after he had finished the film. But during the shoot itself he was a tyrant.

To judge from your book, a film that seems to be a personal favourite is Duvivier's version of *'Anna Karenina'*, made with Vivien Leigh in 1947. Is this so? Yes, and it has partly to do with the fact that for the first time in my career I had absolute freedom and control to do whatever I wanted. We shot the film in England and we had a huge budget, so if I needed 30 or 40 electricians to rig and light a scene, I had them. Duvivier would arrive on the set every day and say, "So, Alekan, what do you need for this shot?" If I told him I needed two days to light a scene – as I did for the suicide scene in the train station – he wouldn't even blink. It was one of the best experiences of my career.

During the 60s you made a number of films with Terence Young, who isn't often classed as a grand auteur. What was it like working with him?

It was great fun, a very agreeable experience. Young was a very relaxed director who would arrive on the set just a few minutes before the scene was going to be shot – like a grand seigneur. We had a very productive working relationship and I think we made one very good film together, *Un, deux, trois, quatre*, a film

about dance in four parts. One piece featured Cyd Charisse, another Zizi Jeanmaire, another Roland Petit. For me, this was a wonderful film, because I adore dance.

Let's talk about your preferences for cinematography – black and white or colour?

I absolutely prefer black and white – for me, colour film doesn't exist, at least not yet. Of course we see the world in colour, but this colour, especially in films, is too realistic for my taste. I believe film should transcend the banal world, and it would almost be more interesting to change the whole colour scheme to achieve a more unrealistic effect, to break through colour as it were. Of course, many interesting films have been made in colour that try to stretch the boundaries of the medium – *One from the Heart* by Coppola, the films of Bertolucci, the cinema of Tarkovsky – and there are many interesting uses of colour in the video format, perhaps more so than in cinema. But I still find it inferior to the colour you see in the paintings of the great masters – Velasquez, Rembrandt, Goya. In these paintings the shadings of the colours create a three-dimensional effect similar to the effect light and shadow can create in black and white films. Colour films never seem to break the two-dimensional plane, which is why I say there isn't a colour cinema yet.

If you could choose only three films to watch, based on cinematographic merit, which would they be?

That would be a difficult choice, so I would want to choose five, if I may.

Certainly.

The first would have to be a film from German Expressionism, and there are so many great films from this period that I would be hard-pressed to choose one. The second would be Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. Certainly this is one of the most widely seen pictures in the history of cinema, but it is for good reason: its visual images are some of the most powerful images put on film. And it has also changed history: that scene where the sailors pull the tent down on the bridge was taught to Soviet children as something that actually happened, when in fact it never did. That alone is a testament to the power of cinema.

The third film I would choose is Carné's *Les Enfants du paradis*. He might have been an impossible director to work with, but in this film, from start to finish, we are given some of the most poetic images in the history of cinema. My fourth film would be a Bergman, and again there are so many I admire it would be difficult to choose just one. For the fifth I would have to choose Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice*, which is a work of real genius from a brilliant master.

Will you work again as a cinematographer or are you going to spend your time now writing books?

I have a book coming out on *La Belle et la bête* that contains 300 previously unpublished photographs and I've been working on another book about my career, though I'm not sure when or if I'll ever finish it. As for shooting another film, I've worked as a cameraman or assistant for 60 years, and I think that's about enough. But who knows? Maybe my acting career is just beginning.



● When "the Jews invented Hollywood", the last people they wanted to see on the screen in their palaces of dreams were Jews. The great pioneers, Carl Laemmle, William Fuchs, Adolf Zukor, Harry Cohn, Lewis Zeleznick (aka Selznick), Schmuël Gelbfisz (aka Samuel Goldwyn) and Louis B. Mayer, wanted to sell America images of a land of infinite possibilities, a country of the imagination, a cornucopia of thrills and desires. The name of the game was a transmutation of penniless immigrants into heroes and heroines, of all the poor and huddled masses into Americans, fearless and free. Those who wished to use the cinema to speak in their own language to the Jews who still huddled in the city sweatshops were exiled to New York, to produce a Yiddish cinema which has survived only in snippets and shreds and a mere handful of projectable films.

Not that Jews were totally invisible. Lester D. Friedman, in *The Jewish Image in the American Film*, counts 319 productions between 1900 and 1929 in which Jews are in some way featured. Culminating, of course, in *The Jazz Singer* – the first film in which Jews speak. There were Jews who were witty, warm and comical, like Eddie Cantor, or like the Marx Brothers, who broke all the rules. The 30s saw few more solemn efforts, *The House of Rothschild* (1934) being one.

Ironically *The House of Rothschild* was re-used by the Nazis, who stole sections of it for the infamous hate film *Der Ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*, 1940). The Jews as destroyers of culture was an enduring Nazi theme, made problematic by the fact that it was impossible, except by violence, to uncouple Jew from non-Jew in the art of Weimar Germany. *Der Ewige Jude* used clips of Jewish actors in 'decadent' poses to illustrate the pernicious effect of Jews on the 'national culture'. But if one looks at the German cinema of the 30s one finds a remarkably homogeneous ethos and style to which Jews and non-Jews contributed equally. A film-maker like Murnau could make the apparently 'Jewish' comment: "I am at home in no house and no country," but Murnau was not in fact Jewish. There was, in Germany as elsewhere, no such thing as Jewish art. The most prominent 'Jewish' image in Weimar film might, ironically, be the grotesque stereotype of Max Schreck's vampire in Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), complete with hooked nose and tapering claws.

#### Kosher for Hollywood

Back in Hollywood, the studios struggled to incorporate the great upheaval of the Second World War into their product. Two films, in 1947, examined anti-semitism: *Crossfire*, directed by Edward Dmytryk, substituted an anti-Jewish for an anti-homosexual motivation in the original material to investigate an unexplained murder. And in Elia Kazan's *Gentleman's Agreement*, Gregory Peck uncovers the heinous practice of WASPs keeping Jews out of their rich hotels. The Jewish victims of the Holocaust were not, as yet, fit subjects for drama. But a more comfortable model of the post-war Jew was found in the newly created State of Israel.

Here at last was a Jew truly Kosher for Hollywood, a pioneer of the Wild East. He was blonde, he walked tall, he carried a gun. He



took Jews out of concentration camps. His name was Ari Ben-Canaan – Lion, Son of Canaan. As played by Paul Newman in Otto Preminger's *Exodus* (1960), he made American Jewish hearts swell with pride. Other films, less effective but even more shrill, followed: *Judith* (1965) and *Cast a Giant Shadow* (1966), in which American heroes saved the State of Israel from destruction single-handedly. Now the American film could engage with the Holocaust, within the theme of the victim redeemed.

The Jew could now come out of the shadows. He, or she, could shout, yell, overturn tables, even masturbate, as in *Portnoy's Complaint*. The nouveau Jew was here, just as other ethnic American groups, the Greeks of Elia Kazan, the blacks of Sidney Poitier, heralded a less mythic American image. Jewish themes emerged cautiously in the European and particularly East European cinema, as in Jan Kadar and Elmar Klos' famous *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), or Andrzej Munk's astonishing but unfinished *Passenger* (1961). But East European cinema was in essence a bold attempt to express the inex-

How has Hollywood film imagined the Jewish experience – and how different is the viewpoint of recent Israeli cinema? By Simon Louvish

# OUT OF THE SHADOWS







Varieties of ethnic experience: Billy Crystal as Buddy Young Jr in 'Mr Saturday Night', left; Sam Rubinek and R.H Thornton argue it out in Eli Cohen's 'The Quarrel', opposite

representation of pristine America, emanating from some mainstream mavericks and independents: from Arthur Penn through Levinson, from Joan Micklin Silver to Jarmusch and Jost, Spike Lee et al.

Yet despite this tendency, in 1993 the Hollywood Jew seems as far from redefinition as ever. Recent examples – Sidney Lumet's *Close to Eden*, David Mamet's *Homicide*, Woody Allen's *Shadows and Fog* – bear witness to the enduring agony of Hollywood's withdrawal symptoms from Ari Ben-Canaan. In Lumet's film, a movie of the most amazing mawkishness, the New York Hassidic Jews investigated by cop Melanie Griffith are apparently a community of saints, lit, throughout, with a diffused golden glow. Juxtaposed against their sanctity is a secular Jewish cop, Levine, who considers that "these people are frankly an embarrassment", and whom the heroine, Emily Eden (geddit?) tags as "an anti-semitic Jew". Levine ends the film literally on crutches, having got himself run over by the villains, as stereotyped a pair of Italian gangsters as ever greased the screen.

#### Wooden Allen

David Mamet, with *Homicide*, goes even further. Once again, a cop, Bobby Gold, an assimilated Jew, investigates a murder which may or may not be connected to a murky past of gun running and Jewish zealotry. He encounters a group of fanatics who speak pidgin-Hebrew and seem bent on bombing a local Nazi printshop. In an instant, Gold, who has hardly considered his Jewish background before, proclaims: "I want to be a part of it." Nothing in the characterisation of the Jewish group suggests they are anything but fanatics akin to the fascist groups which surrounded the late racist Rabbi Meir Kahane. Yet somehow, out of thin air, Gold decides that here is a solidarity to be embraced. As the plot twists on, Gold is betrayed, but his decision to take sides has led him to a new understanding of his Jewish identity.

What these movies have in common is a depoliticising of their Jewish environment, a reduction of complexity and diversity to a new myth: the proud Jew. No longer a comic sceptic, but utterly freed of doubt. A cardboard cut-out in a shifting landscape.

Woody Allen in *Shadows and Fog* returns to the oldest stereotype of all: the Jew as eternal victim. Kleinman – the "small man", lost in an ersatz Weimar night, haunted by an M-like murderer and a Bergmanesque circus. One doesn't have to be a visitor from outer space to urge Allen to return to his funnier, earlier pictures. Fine actors – John Malkovich, Lily Tomlin, Jodie Foster, – are deployed as if they were at amateur night in Yehupetz. It is all supposed to be about profound fears about death and ritual blood libels and self-hate and mass paranoia, but the pastiche of film styles simply reminds us that *M* and *Pandora's Box* and *Sawdust and Tinsel* and *The Face* are great movies, whereas *Shadows and Fog* is not.

The only North American films to have engaged with the issues honestly (apart from ►

pressible against the odds, so it was bound to touch on this taboo too.

A rather different Jewish perspective was developing in the cinema of the State of Israel itself. This had begun in the 30s, in British Mandate Palestine, with a primitive Zionist morale-boosting feature *Oded the Wanderer* (1933). But it really began cooking with gas in 1955 when the British director Thorold Dickinson told the story of the 1948 War of Independence from the point of view of four Zionist fighters in *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer*. The stilted heroic Hebrew dialogue raises gales of laughter from present-day Israeli audiences, but diaspora Jews still weep in the aisles at the tragic fall of East Jerusalem to the aggressive Arabs.

Ideology was the over-riding factor in a state trying to build a national identity out of its rag-bag of veterans and new immigrants. But the Six Day War of 1967, with its consequent occupation of more Arab lands, was bound to set a different agenda. For the first time, the dilemma concerned centrally the issue of power, not powerlessness. The Jew as victim gave way to a

more ambivalent hero, an oppressed oppressor, a lion in a mousetrap. The Israeli cinema began to examine this eroded idol in films such as Yehuda Ne'eman's *Paratroopers* (1977), Shimon Dotan's *Repeat Dive* (1982) and *Smile of the Lamb* (1986), and Yaki Yosha's *The Vulture* (1981). All these films examined the effect of a militarised society on personal psyches.

Hollywood, meanwhile, continued to cling desperately to the receding myth, particularly through that bastion of Zion in exile, the television mini-series. In *A Woman Called Golda* (1982), for example, Ingrid Bergman, tall and beautiful, played Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, who was short and plain as a kugel. Some stereotypes die really hard.

#### Back from the future

The image of pristine America has been replaced today, to the dismay of the Medveds of this world, by a meaner, darker model. Not John Wayne but Arnie Schwarzenegger. But side by side with this megabuck deconstruction we can see a counter trend, a more diverse



◀ Joan Micklin Silver's *Hester Street*, 1974) have come from Canada. Ted Kotcheff's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1974), based on a novel by Mordecai Richler, had Richard Dreyfuss portraying a young Jewish hustler on the make with a vivid ruthlessness. A more recent Canadian film, *The Quarrel* (1991), directed by an Israeli, Eli Cohen, depicts a meeting between two Jewish friends shortly after the Holocaust: one an Orthodox Hassid, the other a secular poet who left the Orthodox fold. The film consists literally of the argument which rages between the two survivors: the Hassid, articulating the awful doctrine that the Holocaust was a divine response to the Jews' failure to fulfil God's commandments; the poet rejecting a faith he considers inhuman, but unable to replace it with any explanation for those horrific events. The central dilemma of the Jewish sensibility – the search for meaning in chaos – is played out in a painful *tour de force*.

#### Power misused

It remains for the most recent Israeli cinema, perhaps, to provide a further twist to the tale. In its examination of the impact of power misused, it has thrown up some powerful challenges to received images. Uri Barbash's *Beyond the Walls* (1984), for instance, portrays the tensions in an Israeli prison between the Palestinian Arab political prisoners and the Israeli Jewish, mostly Sephardic, 'common' criminals. A worsening of prison conditions sparks a tentative coalition between the enemies in the same cage.

The uneasy envoy between the two groups, an Israeli political prisoner, is played by veteran actor-director Assi Dayan, whose most recent film as director, *Life According to Agfa*, was released in 1992. A sombre and powerfully acted piece, it portrays a group of Tel Aviv losers who meet at their regular tavern for a night's sojourn. The only positive souls here are the two Arab cooks, who are the biggest losers of all. (In fact, in their worldly, resigned, wise-cracking mode they are the mirror of a familiar Jewish image.) Into this melange of boozers, junkies and drug-squad cops comes a group of soldiers who proceed to sing racist songs, harass the women and beat up the Palestinian Arabs. They are chased out by the plain-clothed cop, but return in the morning to blast both Jew and Arab to smithereens.

This bizarre, self-flagellatory movie has been a box-office hit in Israel, where the audience recognised its hidden agenda – the poison-pen letter from the son, director Assi Dayan, to his dead father, Israel's war hero General Moshe Dayan: the return of a dud promissory note of an unachieved utopia. It only remains to be seen whether any distributor will be brave enough to show it outside its home. Barbash's *Beyond the Walls*, also a hit in Israel, was picked up by a major US studio, but after an extremely meagre theatrical shelf life ended up as a dubbed video release, masquerading as a common prison drama. Hollywood and Israel is still a marriage made in heaven, but not a love affair down on earth.

'Close to Eden' opens on 11 June and is reviewed on page 50 of this issue

Patricia Brett Erens

## NO CLOSER TO EDEN

Recent films such as 'Mr Saturday Night' and 'Used People' offer fresh visions of Jewishness. Or do they?

Like most British Jews, documentary film-maker Paul Morrison, co-author of *A Sense of Belonging: Dilemmas of British Jewish Identity*, was cautioned from childhood to keep his Jewishness a secret and even today feels reticent about admitting to being Jewish or speaking about his Jewish interests and passions among non-Jews. Such sentiments once typified American Jewry too, though they have had a more visible and vocal presence throughout the twentieth century. And nowhere have they been more visible and vocal than in Hollywood.

American culture, high and low, brims with artists and creators who not only identify as Jews, but who chronicle Jewish life in books, dramas, films and television. And now a new crop of Hollywood films provides a range of popular images and familiar myths about what it means to be Jewish.

*School Ties* (not yet released in Britain) tells the story of high school student David Greene (Brendan Fraser) who wins a football scholarship to an exclusive New England boarding school. As a young Jew growing up on the wrong side of the tracks in Scranton, Pennsylvania, he is fast with his fists and smart enough to know that he would do better to keep his religion to himself. His hunch proves right as he is soon accepted as one of the boys and the object of desire of a pretty blonde at the neighbouring girls' school.

All goes well until the girl's former boyfriend, jealous of the new upstart, does some snooping and discovers the truth. Greene's fall from grace is immediate and total until the end, when he returns to win the final round.

Although set in the 60s, *School Ties* plays like a 40s John Garfield – perhaps a blend of *Body and Soul* and *Gentleman's Agreement* (both released in 1947). There is even a resemblance between the dark good looks and husky bodies of both actors (in *Gentleman's Agreement* Gregory Peck is only posing as a Jew) and in both *Gentleman's Agreement* and *School Ties* the character they play is named Green(e). But the parallels run deeper, for what *School Ties* replays is the well-worn tale of good Jew in a hostile gentile world. This theme was to make its strongest appearance in the post-war period, particularly in the 50s when under pressure from Jewish lobby groups working together under the banner of the Motion Picture Project, a series of films was brought to the screen which promoted positive Jewish images not unlike the positive black images embodied by Sidney Poitier during the same era.

The Garfield films both depict young Jews striving to succeed in a society where they are outsiders. And in each film, when push comes to shove, it is a moral imperative which determines the central character's course of action. In the case of *School Ties*, Greene is guided by the echo of his father's words: "Always remember who you are."

Like his screen predecessors, Greene is almost too good to be true: handsome, intelligent, popular with both

sexes and finally articulate, mature and morally superior to anyone else in the movie. And given that this is a message film, it is hard to believe that anyone short of an anti-semitic would leave the theatre other than favourably impressed with David.

So, what is there to quibble about? The problem is that the film is not only set in the 60s, but its message is retrograde, going back to the 'we're all brothers under the skin' philosophy of *Gentleman's Agreement*. This may have been progressive thinking in 1947, but in the 90s it flies in the face of both reality and history. In a pluralist society like the US, the key operative is *different* but equal, not 'we're all the same'. Further, what producers Sherry Lansing and Stanley R. Jaffe have offered us is a picture that reflects class discrimination as much as religious prejudice. Had they been courageous, they could have focused on farmbelt resentment against Jews, urban black anti-semitism or die-hard neo-Nazi hatred. As it stands, *School Ties* is predictable in its progress and satisfyingly uncomplicated in its ending.

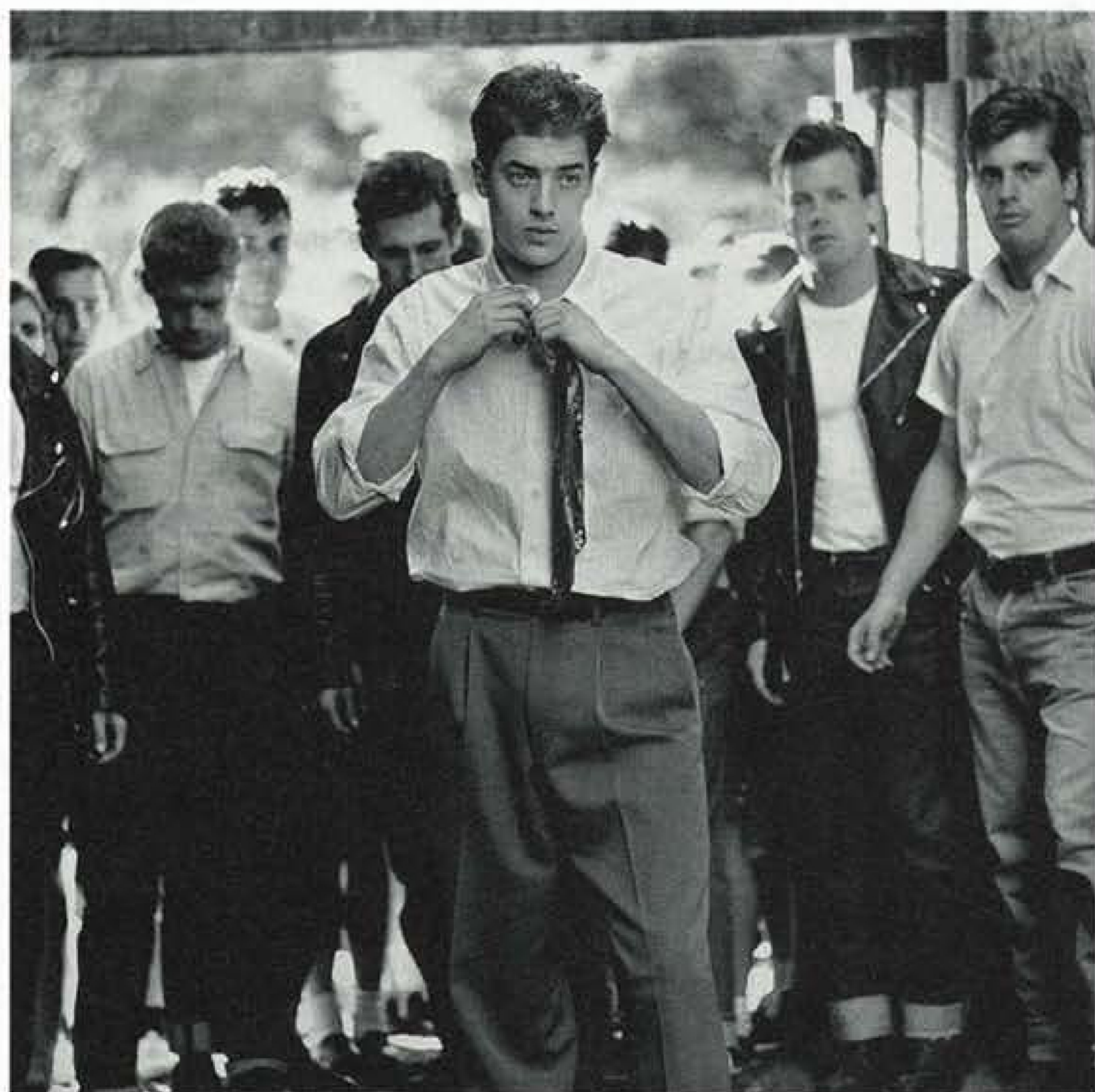
#### Jewish mothers

*Used People* moves us out of gentile society into a Jewish environment, a domestic Jewish world dominated by women. In some ways it is a throwback to films of the 60s such as *Come Blow Your Horn* (1962), *Enter Laughing* (1966), *I Love You, Alice B. Toklas* (1968) and *Goodbye Columbus* (1969) which continued the depictions of reprehensible Jewish mothers found in the 50s work of young male writers such as Herman Wolk, Norman Mailer and Philip Roth. The only difference with *Used People* is that the woman has aged a little and is now a grandmother.

Part comedy, part melodrama (like the proverbial Yiddish stage plays which brought laughter through tears), *Used People* is the story of Pearl Berman (Shirley MacLaine), a recent widow with two grown, dysfunctional daughters with children of their own. And close on the heels of her husband's death comes Joe Meledandri (Marcello Mastroianni), who has long awaited this moment to woo and win the object of his affection. With charm and persistence, as well as food and poetry, he pursues Pearl, finally bridging all cultural chasms to bring the narrative to its joyous conclusion.

The story of the happy coupling of ethnically and religiously distinct groups – personalised through individual romance – is a staple of Hollywood production with roots as far back as the 1910s. Most often it was the Irish and the Jews, as in *Kosher Kitty Kelly* (1926), *The Jazz Singer* (1927) and *Abie's Irish Rose* (1928); more recently it has been Jews and Italians or other ethnics. But despite the Hollywood mythology, the melting-pot ideology never worked as nineteenth-century social scientists envisioned and the dream's failure is played out daily on the streets of America as interacial, interethnic violence erupts. But Hollywood has always loved the story, perhaps because it rein-





Past echoes: 'School Ties', the story of a good Jew in a hostile gentile world, top; Woody Allen in 'Shadows and Fog', above

forced the aspirations for acceptance of Jewish producers and writers or because it was perceived as appealing to several groups at once and thus as good box office.

What is interesting are the distinctions made between different ethnic groups and the way audience sympathy is structured into the narrative. Whereas the Mastroianni character is seen as warm, spontaneous, earthy and physical, the MacLaine character is portrayed as cautious, compulsive and negative – a neurotic housekeeper and a manipulative mother. There is little doubt that audiences will value his life-affirming tendencies over her close-minded world view or will perceive the fate of her overweight and delusional daughters as proof of her failure as a mother.

The cliché of the put-upon Jewish mother has become such an easy target

for ridicule that few question its basis in fact. From the character's first screen appearance in *Marjorie Morningstar* (1958) through the worst excesses of *Portnoy's Complaint* (1972), the Jewish mother has served as a projection of fantasy and sometimes revenge, in screenplays penned mostly by male writers. MacLaine escapes the worse abuses in part because her role escapes the bounds of motherhood and allows for romantic interest. But it is sobering to compare depictions of Jewish mothers with those of Italian mothers in films such as *The Godfather*, *Raging Bull* and *GoodFellas*. Here, despite equally dysfunctional families, the mother is never the dumping ground for all the blame. Likewise, the limitations of WASP parents as in *I Never Sang for My Father* and *Mr. and Mrs. Bridge* are presented as less reprehensible than those of ethnic Jews.

Another recent film which draws on well-established Jewish types is *Mr Saturday Night*, directed, co-written and starring Billy Crystal. Despite some

critical praise, audiences in the US reacted negatively to the sour dimension of Crystal's character. The film centres on the 50-year career of Buddy Young Jnr (Crystal), an ageing stand-up comedian who never quite made it and whose self-centredness prevented him from becoming a decent husband and father, let alone a *mensch*. The character is a composite of the great Catskill comedians of the last half century, from his loud mouth and offensive one-liners to the ubiquitous cigar.

Like the good Jew and the Jewish mother, the Jewish performer, especially the comedian, has a long film history. Over the years Hollywood has made film biographies of real performers like Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson and Lenny Bruce, all of which tell the same story as *Mr Saturday Night* – that of a man driven to success at the expense of his family.

Equally relevant is the comparison with Charlie Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* (though not a Jewish subject) and Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories*, both of which drew heavy criticism from audiences accustomed to seeing their favourite comedians in roles that evoked sympathy and laughter and who felt betrayed by the misanthropic sentiments expressed. Yet clearly any serious study of comedy must reveal the relationship between the unpleasant, the unspoken and the comic. It is the skill of the comedian to reconcile these strands and create a space in which we can laugh without direct confrontation with pain. When comedians fail to provide sufficient mediation or disguise, audiences rebel and reject.

Clearly these comments do not pertain solely to Jewish humour, but Jews have been disproportionately represented as performers and creators for Broadway, film and television. Further, their brand of humour, drawing on the earlier tradition of Yiddish writing, relies heavily on issues such as discrimination, rejection and outright violence, and uses jokes and self-deprecation to salve these wounds. Modern-day practitioners of this tradition include Mel Brooks, Woody Allen and Billy Crystal among others. In particular, Mel Brooks' childhood traumas and Woody Allen's neurotic fears have been translated to the screen in films which expose racism (*Blazing Saddles*) and persecution (the inquisition sequence of *History of the World – Part One*), as well as the slings and arrows of being a marginal man (Woody Allen's entire work).

#### Acerbic jokes

To date, Crystal has preferred a sunny sensibility, though not without its own acerbic bite. But as a sensitive and accomplished inheritor of the traditions of Jewish humour, it is not surprising that he would use his first film to cast a jaundiced but unflinching eye at the predecessor for his own comic style, the borscht-belt stand-up comedian. In fashioning this character, Crystal reveals the way Buddy uses jokes to distance himself from those around him. But perhaps most telling is a rit-

ual that takes place before each performance, as Buddy's brother and business manager pinches his cheek and says, "Hurt them".

*Close to Eden*, directed by Sidney Lumet, is a project determined to present Jews in a favourable light. Bathed in golden ochre cinematography, the film depicts the world of Orthodox Hassidic Judaism. In a plot that is a mirror image of *School Ties*, police detective Emily Eden (Melanie Griffith) arrives in Queens to solve a murder. While in the midst of this closed society, she not only learns the ways of its people but befriends one of its women and falls in love with Ariel, a young Yeshiva student who is inconveniently betrothed to someone else.

Like the films of the 50s, *Close to Eden* obviously sets out to create a positive image of traditional Judaism while somehow making it sufficiently entertaining to attract a popular audience. Predictably it fails on both counts. Although the Jewish press in the US praised the accurate and respectful manner in which religious custom was portrayed, and many Jews *zvelled* (swelled with pride) at the sight of Jewish familial solidarity and ritual observance, the film did not attract a wide audience nor does it do much to further an understanding of contemporary Judaism.

#### Quaint characters

No doubt the international critics who applauded the film at Cannes in 1992 responded, as did many viewers in the US, to a set of quaint, if not exotic, characters reminiscent of the Amish as portrayed in *Witness*. Both films offer up an alien group whose customs are explained to the protagonist so we in the audience can understand them, a narrative propelled by a murder mystery, and a budding romance between the outsider and a member of the group. But unlike *Witness*, *Close to Eden* lacks narrative suspense or a believable romantic plotline, and probably possesses one of the worst scripts of the year. The explanation that Ariel is to the Hassidic community what Mozart was to Viennese society provoked laughter rather than awe at audience screenings. *Close to Eden* is not so much an ineffectual Jewish film as an ineffectual film. Whatever good may have been generated by this voyeuristic look inside a closed society is compromised by a ludicrous narrative and vapid performances.

*Close to Eden* too has its precedents, especially *The Chosen* (1981) and *Yentl* (1983), both of which depict Orthodox Jewish communities. The first focuses on the Hassidim of Brooklyn, a world similar to that of *Close to Eden*. Based on a novel by Chaim Potok, who knew this world from the inside out, it deals with two young men during the 40s, one a Yeshiva student, the other the son of a Zionist, struggling to come to terms with who they are and how they will lead their lives. Lacking the sanctimonious approach of *Close to Eden*, *The Chosen* presents characters in search of identity in a world that rings true ►



◀ because it is part of, rather than a backdrop for, plot developments.

For *Yentl*, Barbra Streisand reworked I. B. Singer's story of a turn-of-the-century Orthodox community in Poland into a feminist fable that succeeds because of the heartfelt emotions and complex situations of the characters. *Close to Eden* fails because it tries too hard to valorise these people. Though we are supposed to judge their values favourably in contrast to the harsh reality and alienation of Emily's world, the truth is that traditional religious communities are not a real option for most Americans, including Jews.

### Holocaust

Woody Allen's *Shadows and Fog*, is a homage to German Expressionism of the 20s and the world of Franz Kafka that focuses on one of the most pervasive stereotypes of all, the Jew as victim. In filmic terms, the role was born as a response to a short period of negative Jewish representation, emanating primarily from the Edison and Vitagraph Studios in their adaptations of *Oliver Twist* and *The Merchant of Venice*, and a series of comedies depicting burlesque Jews, disreputable pawnbrokers and businessmen. The 'victim' films began chronicling the plight of Jews in by-gone eras, and especially in contemporary Tzarist Russia. Brought to the screen by the new breed of Jewish producers, such films include *Bleeding Hearts* (1913), *Uriel Acosta* (1914), *Vengeance of the Oppressed* (1916), *The Yellow Ticket* (1918), *Ben-Hur* (1925) and *Surrender* (1927).

Jewish victims turn up in every era of American movie history. Unhappily, the same can also be said of history, with the result that many narratives about Jews and life centre on Jewish suffering. Among the more familiar titles are: *The Young Lions* (1958), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), *The Pawnbroker* (1964), *The Fixer* (1968), *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971), *Cabaret* (1972), *Sophie's Choice* (1982) and *Enemies, A Love Story* (1989).



The sacred and the profane: the Jewish mother in 'Used People', above left; the prodigal Jewish son in 'Homicide', above right

The list is very long despite Hollywood's reluctance to treat downbeat stories. Not surprisingly, the full story of the Holocaust has been better served by television.

In *Shadows and Fog* Allen attempts to capture the archetypal situation of the Jew in the twentieth century, surrounded by an unstable world where around each dark corner lurks a new danger. The film's protagonist Kleinman is a meek petty clerk with many of the traits of the *shlimiel* which Allen has made world famous. The plot centres on the efforts of the Jewish community in this Prague-like city to capture a lunatic strangler whose victims are primarily Jews and on the difficulty they face in confronting this evil. The killer recalls monsters in previous Expressionist films such as *The Golem* and *Frankenstein*. Yet despite its pre-Second World War setting, *Shadows and Fog* resonates with Holocaust references. Even the title recalls the Alain Resnais documentary, *Night and Fog*, which is itself a reference to the Nazi codename for the



extermination programme. The film is suffused by a sense of paranoia and its underlying message seems to be that when things are bad, it's always worse for the Jews.

But Allen's references are facile and are not explored in any depth, so in the end his subject is more a homage to cinema and its illusionary capabilities than a commentary on the plight of twentieth-century Jewry. The monster is finally dispatched by a circus magician's magic mirror that traps images of everything that passes before its view (a metaphor for the cinema apparatus itself). But the monstrosity of anti-semitism is not so easily annihilated. Movies may be a cure-all for the characters in Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* and *Hannah and Her Sisters*, but in *Shadows and Fog* such sleight-of-hand undercuts the seriousness of the issues.

### Self-hatred

It would seem that the present crop of Jewish films provides only well-worn characters and myths packaged in tired formulas. A notable exception is David Mamet's *Homicide*, an independent production released in the US in

1991 which offers some original premises despite the stiff performances and stereotypical depictions of Israeli terrorists.

The main character, Bobby Gold, is a successful New York cop. An assimilated Jew, he has had little time or inclination for religion – as far as he is concerned, his identity is his profession. Then comes the investigation of the murder of an elderly Jewish woman. At first Bobby is resentful that he was assigned the job because of his ethnic similarity to the murder victim, but as his investigation proceeds it begins to mirror his inner process of self-discovery and the slow recognition that his obsessive need to be the best masks a sense of Jewish self-hatred. He also comes to realise that though he may see himself as a cop, the cops see him as a Jew.

*Homicide* explores the need to belong and the repercussions of multicultural conflict. In an ironic twist, much like the ending of Mamet's *House of Games* (1987), Gold's new-found sense of identity leads not to the hoped-for catharsis, but to destruction and betrayal.

It seems significant that Mamet's *Homicide* is an independent production, and perhaps if new Jewish narratives are to emerge they will have to come from outside Hollywood. Happily there is once again a healthy atmosphere for independent features in the US, with the commercial releases of works like *My Own Private Idaho*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Gas Food Lodging*, *Daughters of the Dust*, *El Mariachi* and others. There is also a wide range of low-budget features on contemporary Jewish life that turn up at Jewish film festivals around the country and at the London Jewish Film Festival at the NFT. Some, like the British films *Antonia and Jane*, *The Plot Against Harry* and *Zebrahead* garner commercial runs. Women have been especially prominent in this area. Perhaps they will even provide a new perspective on the Jewish mother.

## Pulling off the beards

Gary Sinyor asks if his film 'Leon the Pig Farmer' can be understood by non-Jews?

Will non-Jewish people understand 'Leon the Pig Farmer'? This is the question I've been asked most at every screening where the audience has been dominated by Jewish people.

The answer is threefold. On the one hand, if you're the 'Sight and Sound' reviewer, the answer is no. On the other hand, non-Jews genuinely get what the film is largely about (stereotyping and the desire to pretend to be something other than what one is) and find it very funny. On the other hand, there are a few specific jokes that only a Jewish audience will get. Or one very acquainted with the Jewish way of life.

American cinema has largely contributed to the English understanding of Judaism – although not to my mind through those films which specifically deal with 'Jewishness'.



The peculiarities of the English: Vadim Jean/Gary Sinyor's 'Leon the Pig Farmer'

'Homicide' is my favourite bug bear. As a thriller, fine. But as an exploration of how a lapsed Jewish cop finds his roots (zigzagging from the most orthodox of Hassidic communities to ardent Zionists) it is appalling. In terms of truth of character it gets zero. And if you haven't got at least five

on the truth of character scale, you should maybe reconsider the concept.

The films that have portrayed Jewishness in a way that have had influence are the films of Woody Allen. Or Mel Brooks. Or Neil Simon. Their films usually don't deal directly with Jewishness but it's there in the writing. Are

not both characters in 'The Odd Couple' Jewish? Has Woody Allen ever played a non-Jew? Those writers who work in truth have defined Jewishness for the rest of us. And they've mainly done it through comedy. American humour and Jewish humour have become almost synonymous.

We wanted to show that British Jewishness is the same in some ways, different in others. Let's say an established English trait is to be unemotional in public. The established Jewish trait is not to worry about being emotional. In New York, everyone is emotional. There's no conflict. In England, there is a very real conflict between the two styles of life. If I'm proud of 'Leon' it's because it is a film that deals with Jewishness up front but in a way that many people – Jews and non-Jews – are comfortable with. The last American film that did that for me was 'Crossing Delancey'.

In the US the constant updating of Jewish life is reflected in its best films. When we see Jews stuck in a time warp as if they've just got off the boat from Europe, it's time to do the equivalent of what the women's movement did years ago. Pull off our beards and fake payot and burn them.





## SETTLING THE SCORE

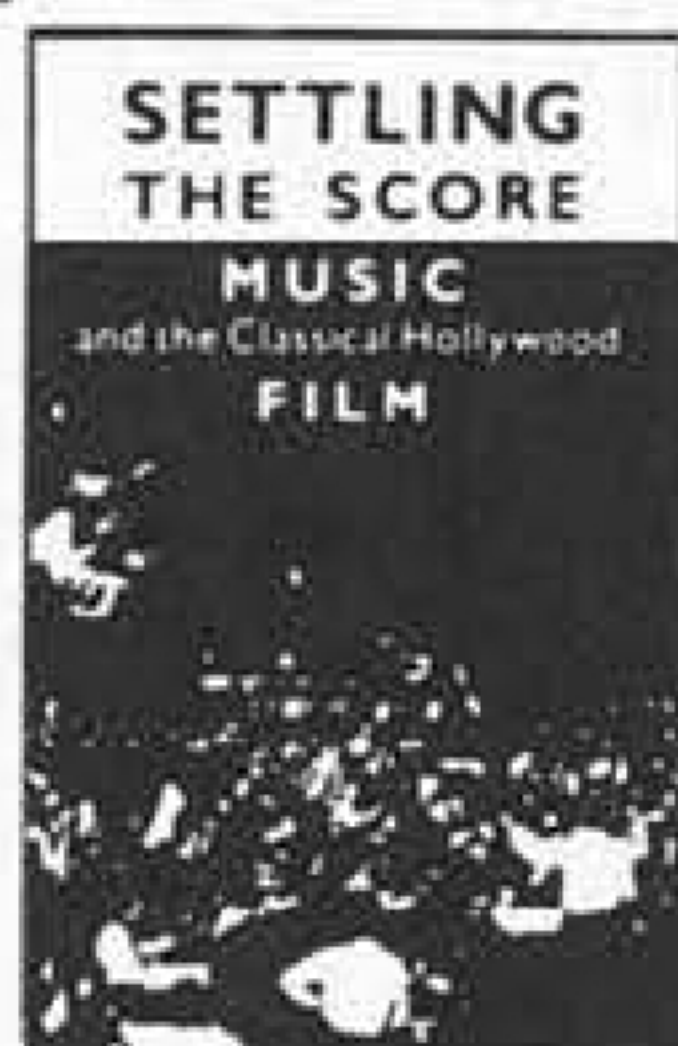
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Cyril Collard, director of 'Les Nuits fauves', died recently of Aids. What does his controversial film tell us about homosexuality, Aids and French culture? By Simon Watney

# THE FRENCH CONNECTION

● The recent death of director Cyril Collard from Aids casts a cloud of cultural beatification across his only film, *Les Nuits fauves*, which earlier this year won four Césars including the prize for best French film. Though our awareness of a director's HIV status should not affect our judgement of his or her work, it is also apparent that any film about HIV/Aids will inevitably be caught up in the cultural and political struggles surrounding the supposed meaning of the epidemic. While critics such as Susan Sontag have insisted that Aids should be stripped of all metaphors and HIV presented as "just a virus", as Jan Zita Grover points out in *Taking Liberty*, "language is itself metaphor, and we can no more 'purify' it in discussing disease than in describing a beautiful day or how love makes us feel."

France has on the whole missed out on the longstanding debates about the wider social and political significance of cultural representations of HIV/Aids that have featured so strongly in the Anglo-American cultural studies movement and society in general. In Britain the government response to Aids has been typically muddled and contradictory, including adequately funded and effective prevention work among injecting drug users that has resulted in a steady decline in new cases of HIV, compared with little government funding or support for gay and bisexual men, who make up 70 per cent of cases of HIV and 80 per cent of Aids cases. In other words, HIV prevention work with injecting drug users has gone ahead in spite of claims that this might "condone" or "promote" drug use, while education for gay and bisexual men has all too often been neglected or censored on precisely the grounds that it would somehow "condone" or "promote" homosexuality.

In France there are still few state-funded needle exchanges and next to nothing has been done for homosexual and bisexual men who make up more than 50 per cent of French Aids cases. As a direct result of such neglect, France now has 500 per cent more Aids cases than the UK, with an estimated 250,000 cases of HIV compared to an estimated total of 50,000 in the UK (the countries have similar overall populations). Half of France's 3,000 haemophiliacs



became infected by HIV as the result of mismanagement in the CANTS, the government agency responsible for the safety of blood products. It cannot be sufficiently emphasised that a high proportion of French cases of HIV could have been avoided had the government acted in a responsible manner. Notions of French citizenship do not appear to extend to haemophiliacs, homosexuals or injecting drug users.

I use the word 'homosexual' because French language and society lack any real equivalent to the word 'gay', which provides a confident sense of individual and collective identity in Anglophone societies. Thus the very group most devastated by HIV in France is not understood to exist as a legitimate social constituency, let alone as a constituency with special and desperate health needs. Last autumn the country's only national community-based homosexual magazine went out of business, while Paris is one of the few leading European cities without a lesbian and gay film festival. In other words, France largely lacks the gay community groups, organisations and publications which have proved effective in providing HIV education to those at greatest risk in Britain and other northern European countries.

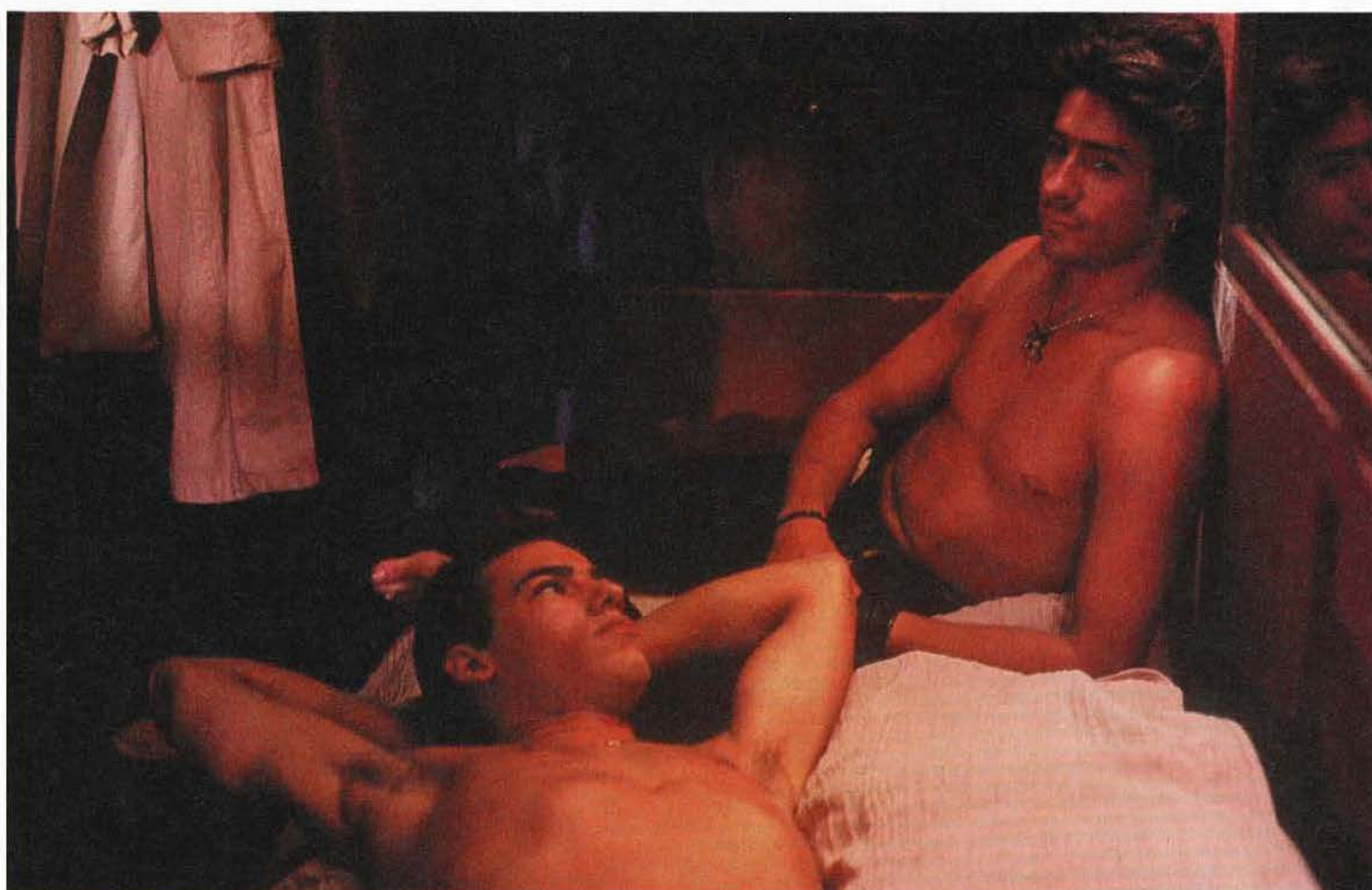
While it is doubtful that the French socialist government set out to create a situation in which the majority of French injecting drug users and homosexual and bisexual men would contract HIV, this is the predictable and inevitable consequence of continued inaction. Unless adequate measures are implemented, most members of these groups in France seem likely to die, apparently unnoticed and unlamented. France has painstakingly created a cat-

astrophic HIV epidemic, which at the same time is widely regarded as natural and inevitable. In London some one in five gay men taking the HIV test are HIV positive; in Paris this is closer to one in three. This is what the late Hannah Arendt meant by "administrative massacre". And this is the context in which *Les Nuits fauves* was produced and received.

With its explicit opening reference to Genet and presumably unintentionally comical homage to Pasolini in a direct lift from *Teorema*, *Les Nuits fauves* comes from the heart of French homosexual culture. The film is set in 1986, a moment when much less was known about HIV (though the film's central character is shown taking AZT, which at the time was only beginning to become available). Collard described his film as "an almost classic love story" and at the same time the story of a man "who doesn't know how to love". On neither level is it very successful, partly due to Collard's own weak performance as Jean, the 30-year-old HIV-positive bisexual protagonist. Nor are British audiences likely to respond warmly to the banal "Aids is teaching us all a lesson" conclusion, which is all the film sets out to illustrate.

*Les Nuits fauves* works best as a picture of the psychology of French sexuality, in reality a very different thing from British fantasies as propagated by *Carry On* films and the like. Jean's bisexuality cannot provide him with an identity which can in any way help him to articulate his social and political predicament (indeed, none of the men in the film even identifies as homosexual). While I am hardly an advocate of so-called 'positive images', it is surely significant that the few homosexuals we encounter are coded as more or less monstrous and freakish in what from an Anglophone perspective can only appear as French homophobia. Jean's boyfriend Samy gains a sense of the ugliness of racism in a somewhat distracting subplot, but Collard seems unable to relate questions of racism or homophobia to the specifics of the epidemic in France, where both have played such a major role. This is why the film is ultimately so depressing and so unintentionally instructive. For it illustrates with some insight the psychological workings of a culture which is so profoundly homophobic that the





**Before the storm: Cyril Collard, director and protagonist of 'Les Nuits fauves', with his two on-screen lovers – a young passionate woman, opposite, and his male lover Sammy, above**

very idea of a collective social or cultural response to Aids on the part of homosexuals is all but unthinkable.

It is typical of the film's confusion that we become more involved in the heroine's HIV anxiety than in the central male character's illness. That Jean has unsafe sex with his much younger girlfriend should surely simply make the point that in 1986, as today, it is not difficult for people routinely or occasionally to neglect the need for safer sex because it does not seem emotionally appropriate.

Several honourable semi-didactic Aids films

have been made in the US, where the epidemic is running some years ahead of the situation in Europe. Arthur Bressan Jnr's *Buddies* (1985), Bill Sherwood's *Parting Glances* (1985) and Norman Rene's *Longtime Companion* (1990) all present Aids as experienced by gay men and all chart a movement from shock and disbelief to mounting anger, action and a determination to work together to end the epidemic. This type of community awareness is almost inconceivable in France, where a ghastly, weary fatalism prevails. *Les Nuits fauves* illustrates the extent to which French homosexuals and French homosexual culture is unable to understand, let alone articulate, its terrible predicament. Towards the end of the film Jean's mother

tells him: "This virus can enable you to love." I squirmed with a mixture of embarrassment and moral nausea at this pious statement. We do not need a catastrophic epidemic to teach men and women how to love. In this respect the film resembles author Alma Cullen's Central TV mini-series *Intimate Contact* (1987), which also found in Aids an extreme example of the universal problems of ignorance and prejudice.

What nobody in Collard's cinematic world seems to understand, let alone communicate, is that this epidemic has been and continues to be allowed to happen. And world cinema, let alone French, is not responding well.

*'Les Nuits fauves' opens on 18 June and is reviewed on page 62 of this issue*









Were Italian political Westerns brutish, nasty and over-long, or a kind of popular political cinema with a firm dislike for Sergio Leone's cold superhero? By Christopher Frayling

● In 1966 radical screenwriter Franco Solinas of *Salvatore Giuliano* and *La Battaglia di Algeri* fame wrote a treatment set in Sardinia about a young policeman working for a group of corrupt local government bosses who tracks down an elderly peasant accused of molesting a little girl. Although by the end of the story the policeman realises that the accused is in fact an innocent man framed because of his left-wing political activities, he shoots him just the same. The lawman's promotion prospects and connections with the political establishment over-ride his sense of justice.

By the time this treatment had been turned into a film called *La resa dei conti* (*The Big Gundown*, 1967), the policeman had turned into sheriff Lee van Cleef, the elderly peasant into a wily young Mexican called Cuchillo (played with much charisma by Cuban actor Tomas Milian) and the setting had shifted from Sardinia to Texas. Following last-minute advice from Sergio Leone, the ending too was changed beyond all recognition. In the movie as made, sheriff Corbett joins forces with Cuchillo for a final duel with the corrupt capitalists, accompanied on the soundtrack by Ennio Morricone's version of Beethoven's *Für Elise* rearranged for Spanish guitar. After much staring and reaching for firearms, the baddies eventually bite the Almerian dust.

Director Sergio Sollima had adapted the treatment with the help of one of Leone's more gifted writers, Sergio Donati (as well as taking his title from one of the main musical themes in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*). Sollima, at least, was convinced that some of the original political message had survived the transition from Southern Italian to Western: "I liked the contrast between the superefficiency, the technology and the scientific mentality of the lawman... and the subproletarian, who lived on his wits and animal cunning.... It could have been the story of an American Green Beret against the Vietcong, or of an English officer against a native boy at the time of British Imperialism in India... Cuchillo worked as a character because in the audience – and especially the young audience – he seemed 'one of them', rather than a cold, remote superhero such as Clint Eastwood. It was of course the time leading up to the events of May '68."

It was also a time when, according to Jean-Luc Godard's collaborator Jean-Pierre Gorin, "Every Marxist on the block wanted to make a Western." Shortly after May '68, student leader



Strange meeting: Lee van Cleef as the sheriff in 'The Big Gundown', left and above

Daniel Cohn-Bendit went to Rome and started to prepare, as he described it, a "left-wing Western... about miners on strike, who fight against their masters, about the boss with his gang of thugs who attacks the workers, the workers who take over the mine, and so on. At one point there was to have been a duel." But Godard reworked the project and turned it into the very different *Wind from the East* – as much a deconstruction of the Italian Western as of the American one. A fairly uncompromising version of Cohn-Bendit's story was to turn up three years later as *La collera del vento* (*Trinity Sees Red*), directed by self-styled specialist in 'class struggle' movies, Mario Camus.

Between 1965 and 1969 the Western – Italian-style – provided a singularly appropriate way of putting over radical ideas and stories to popular audiences, especially in second- and third-run cinemas in Italy and what was then known as the Third World. The genre was pioneered by a fistful of writers and directors based in Rome who admired Hollywood Westerns – specifically interventionist movies such as *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Alamo* (both 1960) – while rejecting their new frontier ideology. These film-makers knew a great deal about American pop culture, had gained their first experiences in the industry just after Marshall Aid came to an end working side by side with Hollywood crews at Cinecittà and Elias, and shared the fascination of fashionable intellectuals for Third World politics. The box-office success of Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* and *For a Few Dollars More* had created the necessary context by encouraging producers in Italy, Spain and West Germany to re-tool the Cinecittà assembly lines for the mass production and distribution of Westerns. For a brief historical moment, ►

# THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH



◀ the fusion of Westerns and critiques of imperialism seemed both interesting and commercially viable.

So though Solinas had expected his treatment to end up looking like Rosi's low-budget *Salvatore Giuliano* (1961), it in fact became one of Lee van Cleef's greatest hits, complete with the publicity line "Mr Ugly Comes to Town" (in fact, Van Cleef had played Mr Bad in Leone's epic, but that might have put off the paying customers). *La resa dei conti* even stimulated an equally popular sequel a year later: Sollima's *Corri, uomo, corri* (*Run Man, Run*, a title taken from Morricone's theme song for *The Big Gundown*), in which Cuchillo found some gold hidden in a printing press and donated it to the cause of the Mexican revolutionaries. As Solinas was to recall: "The original idea of *La resa dei conti* was one of the most precise and clear-headed I ever had. But Sollima made it much more of a romance. Then he used the same character in another film, and he might at least have phoned me to let me know."

The cycle of 'political' Italian Westerns began with Damiano Damiani's *Quien sabe?* (*A Bullet for the General*), released in early 1966. This film, whose success in flea pits all over Europe surprised even its contributors, was about the cat and mouse relationship between a taciturn Gringo called Bill Tate (Lou Castel) and an explosive Mexican bandit/revolutionary (Gian Maria Volonté). As the relationship develops, the Mexican begins to understand what the revolution is really about, while the Gringo reveals that he's only there for the dollars. Eventually the bandit shoots the Gringo and gives his share of the reward money to a passing peon, telling him to buy not bread but dynamite. Solinas, who co-wrote this script as well, described *Quien sabe?* as a pop version of his

more prestigious contributions, in particular *La Battaglia di Algeri* and *Queimada!*.

The *Cahiers du cinéma* group and some of the Italian critics interpreted this change of direction for Italian Westerns as a mixture of opportunism (breaking into Third World markets) and defusing "revolutionary discourse" by turning it into a bloody and spectacular circus. All these films demonstrated, wrote one critic, was that "the heart is more human than the robot", which was no substitute for political analysis. But in the process, the phrase "political Westerns" was coined – a phrase which Gian Maria Volonté, for one, was quick to reject: "I wouldn't talk about politics in these terms. That's critic talk... I reject labels like 'political' which film pages seem to like so much."

## School of violence

Damiano Damiani, who had started his career with neo-realist scripts for Cesare Zavattini, acknowledged the political element of the films, but contested the idea that they could be called Westerns: "*Quien sabe?* is not a Western... The Western belongs to Protestant North American culture. South of the Rio Grande, there is no West: there is Mexico. It's something else... *Quien sabe?* is a film about the Mexican Revolution, and is clearly a political film and could not be otherwise. *Quien sabe?* has the same structure as *Queimada!*, a structure that is articulated around the relationship between coloniser – in this case the North American – and his kind of culture, his kind of economic power, who enters a Third World country and expects to be the hero of this world... The Mexican, the colonised, though, at a certain point realises he should actually kill the man who is offering him the money. 'But why are you eliminating me?' asks the surprised American. 'Quien sabe?' Which means 'I don't know, because I don't have the education to rationalise all this, so I'm killing you because I feel I have to kill you.'"

Another veteran of neo-realist days, Carlo Lizzani, got in on the trend with *Requiescant* (*Kill and Pray*, 1967), the story of the sole survivor (Lou Castel, with Mexican make-up and a Bible) of a massacre on land annexed to Texas, who tracks down the misogynist, racist Confederate patriarch responsible for the deed (Mark Damon), and who is eventually converted to the revolutionary cause by a radical priest played by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Lizzani's major contribution (apart from the extraordinary

feat of persuading Pasolini to take on the part) was to superimpose the theme of misogyny vs loving community of equals on to the usual coloniser vs colonised plot. So the villain is unusually brutal to his women and the frontier prostitutes (an obligatory feature, by then, of the Italian frontier) go on strike as a result.

The involvement of Pasolini (at the same time as Fellini was making *Toby Dammit*, described as "the first Catholic Western, the return of Christ to the frontier" shot in the styles of "Dreyer, Pasolini, with a touch of Ford" to look like "a mixture of Piero della Francesca and Fred Zinnemann") provided an unusual point of contact between the northern film world intelligentsia and the assembly lines of Cinecittà. Lizzani gave Pasolini – whose sunken cheeks made him look like an up-market version of Jack Palance – the key speech:

*Don Juan*: "I guess you must think I'm only some sort of peon. I'm a priest... I guide these men, but not in the way a pastor protects his flock... our plan is to free ourselves, and this Book will bring in freedom."

*Requiescant*: "What will happen? The best crops, the pueblos, the best cows and bulls will change masters, and the new masters will just have new slaves."

*Don Juan*: (handing him the Bible): "Ideas, not cattle, are the most important things that have to be changed..."

Lizzani also gave Pasolini the curtain line, which in retrospect seems like yet another comment on Leone's cold superhero: "Unfortunately, we need men like you; for you are the most expert killer of all."

Sollima's *Faccia a Faccia* (*Face to Face*, 1967) takes the political and sexual fascism of Lizzani's villain one step further. Here, Gian Maria Volonté plays a Boston college professor who goes to Texas for the sake of his health and becomes fascinated by the "instinctive reactions" of celebrated leader of the Wild Bunch Beauregard Bennett (Tomas Milian). Volonté takes over Beau's gang, reorganises it on the principles of scientific management and, as he enjoys yet another spot of sado-masochism, transforms the brutality of the Italian Western into a Nietzschean philosophy of the wild frontier: "You must know that torture's important, it lifts the morale of the torturer... What's surprising is that a man like me could remain all those years watching life as a spectator, before he discovered the force that was within him... The philosophy of violence; you recall it: one



In the beginning: Lou Castel and Gian Maria Volonté in 'A Bullet for the General', the first of the Italian political Westerns





violent soul is just an outlaw, a hundred, an army of violent men, violence by masses of men is called *history*!" The professor even raises his bloody hand in a version of the fascist salute. Also Sprach Spaghetti.

Sollima has gone on record as saying that the "weird osmosis" between the central characters represents the high point of his career as a director and that the torture sequence is a covert reference to the activities of the Gestapo in the Via Tasso in Rome towards the end of the Second World War (as featured in Rossellini's *Rome, Città Aperta*). Co-writer Sergio Donati believes the point was probably lost on the action-film audience: "The film was far too verbose; I dislike long expositions of principles in films, and I don't believe you can have such explicit ideologies and Westerns both together. Sollima was far too didactic about it."

## The damned superhero

Italian Westerns were usually criticised for being too action-packed, pitched at audiences in the Roxy Calabria with a dangerously low boredom threshold and a habit of talking through the boring bits. So it was quite something, in 1967, for writers and critics to be complaining about the length of speeches in over-didactic Spaghetthis. And there were other

surprises in store for Southern Italian audiences. According to Sergio Corbucci, one irate customer in Sicily was so upset by the ending of *Il grande silenzio* (1968) in which hero Jean-Louis Trintignant is shot dead in the snow by a fur-coated Klaus Kinski that he started shooting at the screen.

Corbucci's contributions – *Il mercenario* (*A Professional Gun*, 1968, developed from a treatment by Solinas and a forerunner of his masterpiece *Queimada!*), *Il grande silenzio* (*The Big Silence*), *Le Spécialiste* (*Drop Them or I'll Shoot*, 1969) and *Vamos a matar, compañeros!* (*Compañeros*, 1970) – were criticised for not being committed enough. *Cahiers du cinéma* described them as jokey comic-strip movies that parodied every filmmaker from Chuck Jones to Sergei Eisenstein, paying lip service to revolutionary themes while at the same time demonstrating that "the revolution is really there just for enjoyment." In *Compañeros* another outsider helps the Mexican revolutionaries' story – this time with Franco Nero as the Swede Yod and Tomas Milian as a bandit/rebel dressed up as Che Guevara. Jack Palance's performance as a pot-smoking villain with a wooden hand and a pet falcon named Marsha seriously distracts from the central theme, described by Corbucci as "the calamities which capitalism brings to the

Third World". Palance has a wooden hand because Yod once nailed him to a cross:

"How *did* you get down from that cross?"

"It was Marshal!"

"She pulled out the nail?"

"No, she ate my hand!"

The debate about the politics of the Italian Western in the mid to late 60s – which at one time or another involved such luminaries as Jean-Luc Godard, Simone de Beauvoir, Glauber Rocha, Gillo Pontecorvo, several critics on *Cahiers du cinéma* and the Vatican – is now a period piece. Sergio Leone was very cynical about the whole business and made *Giù la testa* (*A Fistful of Dynamite*, 1971) to show how irrelevant the debate really was. As he characteristically put it to me: "I can only say of these so-called 'political' or 'intelligent' Westerns, that when they write that I am the father of the Italian Western, I just think 'how many sons of bitches have I spawned?'"

Of the hundreds of Westerns made in Italy between 1964 and 1978, only about 20 were described at the time as 'political Westerns', though some of their themes and concerns were to turn up all over the place. Yet compared with the diffuse unease and paranoia that characterised radical films made in Hollywood (where then as now it is always the fault of 'the system', 'the conspiracy' or 'the scandal', never social structures or economic tendencies), these films, whatever their undoubted shortcomings – sexual politics being one of them – at least present their case in a precise, clear-headed, even analytical way. Especially if Solinas had anything to do with them. And they certainly attempted to shift the point of audience identification from the cold superhero to Fanon's wretched of the earth.

Now that the cold superhero has graduated from the Roxy Calabria to mega-budget, globally marketed movies, this seems almost a cause for nostalgia. Or perhaps not. Perhaps it is more a question of "Don't cry for me, Cinecittà", since some of the films certainly are nasty, brutish and over-long. In the late 60s, the political Westerns usually crept on to the British market cut to pieces as 'Z' movies on the bottom half of action double bills, which is where I first saw them. Now they have been re-issued on video, there's a chance to re-evaluate both the films and the historical moment from which they emerged.

'A Bullet for the General', 'Face to Face' and 'Kill and Pray' are available on Aktiv video



Down Mexico way:  
Franco Nero coming to the  
aid of the oppressed in  
Corbucci's 'Compañeros',  
top; Jack Palance shows  
Nero his wooden hand in  
the same film, left





# NEW MEXICAN TALES

Low-budget sex romps, vampire movies and Westerns are among the genres transformed by a new generation of Mexican film-makers.  
By Leonardo Garcia Tsao

● It's perhaps still too early to speak of a Mexican New Wave, but something is surely happening in Mexican cinema. Although it might be denied by cynical wags who have made a career of being sceptical, the resurgence of Mexican cinema is not just wishful thinking on the part of government officials. After more than a decade of crisis, a number of recent films have proved to be worthy of good reviews, competition at international festivals and commercial success. For the first time in years, quality Mexican titles like Alfonso Arau's *Como agua para chocolate* (*Like Water for Chocolate*) and Alfonso Cuarón's *Sólo con tu pareja* (*Tale of Love and Hysteria*) have made big earnings at the box office, while both Maria Novaro's *Danzón* and Jaime Humberto Hermosillo's *La tarea* (*Homework*) enjoyed theatrical releases in the US and Europe.

Part of the change is due to the current administration of Imcine, the state film company which is responsible for most of the quality production. It's a well-known fact that the minute the government authorities turn their backs on Mexican cinema, it lapses into a coma. State funding for ambitious films has not been given so freely as it is today since the Echeverría regime (1970-76), when the president's brother Rodolfo backed a positive if flawed production plan. Created in 1983, Imcine has only begun to show results in the present regime of President Salinas de Gortari, thanks to a policy of co-productions with private companies run by the film-makers themselves. This allows the film-maker to become more independent of

state financing and perhaps to assure his or her survival in future, leaner years.

Imcine has favoured first works by young directors, mostly film-school graduates in their late 20s and early 30s. And this is perhaps Mexican cinema's greatest asset: a new generation of film-makers who are supplying a much-needed infusion of new blood. Of course, that's not to say that the older directors have faded away: accomplished authors from the 70s such as Hermosillo, Paul Leduc and Arturo Ripstein continue to produce an interesting body of work while still developing their own styles and themes. These are quite different from those of their successors.

Despite the fact that Mexico City, where most film activity is based, is hundreds of miles from the US border, American pop culture is almost home-grown. The new Mexican film-makers have been weaned on a heady mix of Hollywood movies, rock music, comic books, Looney Tunes, MTV and Walt Disney, combined with national fixtures drawn from Mexican film myths – singing idol Pedro Infante, comic Tin-Tan, wrestling hero El Santo. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the young directors of the 90s are more Hollywood-oriented than their counterparts of the 70s, whose influences were more strongly European, drawing in particular on the *nouvelle vague*.

Furthermore, directors such as Leduc, Ripstein and Felipe Cazals – who has recently announced his retirement – were more political. Films such as *Reed: Mexico insurgente* (*Reed: Insurgent Mexico*), *Cadena perpetua* (*In for Life*) and





'Angel de fuego', Dana Rotberg's tale of a young fire-eater (Evangeline Sosa), opposite; 'Cronos', Guillermo del Toro's vampire story with Tamara Shanatis and Federico Luppi, above; 'Bandidos', Luis Estrada's homage Western, below



*Canoa* dealt with important social issues from a critical standpoint which is missing from the work of the majority of the young directors. But what they lack in political awareness is compensated for by a remarkable film sense. The first features of the latest generation show an assured technical proficiency developed from both film-school attendance and professional experience, in that most of them cut their teeth as assistant directors to established colleagues in either film or television.

Alfonso Cuarón is a case in point. After studying at the national university film school CUEC, Cuarón worked as assistant and directed second unit for national and foreign productions (including *Romero* and *Diplomatic Immunity*) and made a few episodes of the horror television series *Hora marcada* before shooting his first feature *Sólo con tu pareja* (1991). This nimble farce about a modern-day Don Juan who gets his just deserts when mistakenly led to believe he has contracted Aids, benefits from Cuarón's dynamic sense of comedic pace and imaginative *mise en scène*. The film has caused controversy because of its supposedly light-hearted treatment of the disease, but in fact it is less about Aids than about the responsibility to practise safer sex. Although Cuarón has cited Ernst Lubitsch and Blake Edwards as sources of inspiration, one can also spot the influence of Martin Scorsese's giddy camerawork and sharp editing, and of Pedro Almodóvar's irreverent humour. Following the example of his friend and compatriot Luis Mandoki, who has directed *White Palace* and the remake of *Born Yes-*

*terday*, Cuarón is ready to start a Hollywood career. If he never returns, it will be a blow for Mexican cinema.

For decades comedy was the domain of cheap producers who churned out low-budget sex romps for quick profit. Most of the quality directors of the 70s were too serious-minded to exploit the genre, so it is refreshing to find members of the new generation who are revitalising its reputation. Carlos Carrera, who specialised in animation at the state film school CCC, turned to live action with *La mujer de Benjamín* (*Benjamin's Woman*, 1990), one of the Mexican titles which has been in demand on the festival circuit and has won quite a few prizes. Coolly ironic, the film is a canny reworking of the Beauty and the Beast theme. In a stagnant Mexican town, the punch-drunk village idiot kidnaps a wily young girl who wants to escape the boredom of provincial life and so uses the kidnapping to her own advantage. Carrera manages to slip a quirky love story into an acute portrayal of the repressive religious mores and petty values of small-town Mexico.

Carrera's follow-up, *La vida conyugal* (*Married Life*, 1992), is a black comedy based on a novel by Sergio Pitlor that cruelly dissects the Mexican *nouveau riche* through a description of sixty years of a couple's marriage. Fed up with her inattentive husband, who is too busy looking after his illegal business, the wife takes a few lovers and tries to murder her equally unfaithful spouse. Just as the film begins to lose steam, the heroine turns into a matronly, female version of Wile E. Coyote, her murderous ►



◀ schemes backfiring to hilarious effect. Carrera displays the macabre humour that characterised his award-winning animated shorts and reveals himself as a true misanthrope, viewing all forms of human endeavour – and especially relationships – with utter scepticism.

Guillermo del Toro is the only one of the new generation from outside Mexico City (he's from Mexico's second largest city, Guadalajara). A devoted fan of horror films and comic books, Del Toro made a couple of shorts and some episodes of *Hora marcada*, as well as working as a special-effects and make-up artist on a handful of pictures, before writing and directing *Cronos* (*The Chronos Device*, 1992). The improbable hero of this unusual vampire film is an elderly antique dealer who is turned into an unwilling vampire by a medieval device that houses a blood-drinking insect. Trouble arrives when a terminally diseased millionaire covets the device in the hope of gaining eternal life.

Del Toro dispenses with the clichés of the genre – fangs, coffins and fear of crucifixes, daylight and garlic – in favour of a melancholic character whose craving for blood is a solitary vice akin to drug-taking (here is a vampire who won't hesitate to lick spilt blood off a public lavatory floor). The director expresses his admiration for masters of the genre such as Terence Fisher and Mario Bava through subtle visual references, while thematically the film is linked to David Cronenberg's obsession with the decay of the flesh. Witty and technically accomplished, *Cronos* is a post-modern vampire movie that isn't afraid to show its heart. Not surprisingly, Del Toro has also begun to receive offers from Hollywood.

Not all young Mexican directors have produced such imaginative treatments of traditional genres. After studying at CUEC and working as an assistant director, Luis Estrada (son of the late director José Estrada) has so far made Mexican films disguised as Hollywood product. His first effort *Camino largo a Tijuana* (*Long Journey to Tijuana*, 1988), an independent feature shot in 16mm, is an uneasy blend of influences, a sort of *Mad Max Walks the Streets of Fire in Paris, Texas*. Yet in spite of its derivative nature, the film demonstrates Estrada's talent for atmosphere and frame composition.

His next work *Bandidos* (*Bandits*, 1991) purports to be a Western but is in fact a collection of homages loosely connected by a plot about four children during the Mexican Revolution who become fearless bandits, doing battle with gangs of adult rivals. Estrada apes the slow-



'La vida conyugal', Carrera's black comedy about the nouveau riche, with Isabel Benet, Alvaro Currero and Alfredo Sevilla

motion mayhem of Sam Peckinpah and the stylised excesses of Sergio Leone without any hint of personal commitment or sense of national identity. His next feature, *Ambar* (*Amber*, 1993), still in post-production, is reported to be an adventure movie in which the film-maker's visual flair is much in evidence.

Half a dozen women directors have emerged in the past four years who seem less keen to place Hollywood genres in a Mexican context or to exercise their technical know-how than their male colleagues. Instead, their work displays a common interest in establishing a female, if not feminist, point of view. Their stories usually focus on middle-class urban women and their tribulations in love, marriage and motherhood. María Novaro is the best known of the group, and the light-hearted fancifulness of her second feature *Danzón* (1991) won it praise in the international press and huge commercial success at home.

Dana Rotberg is the youngest and the one who has sidestepped what could be called 'female themes'. Her *Intimidad* (*Intimacy*, 1989) is a sarcastic bedroom comedy about a hen-pecked professor in the throes of a mid-life crisis. However, as she revealed in her documentary *Elvira Luz Cruz, pena máxima*, made while still at CCC, her key interest is the social and moral woes of the underprivileged. Her second feature *Angel de fuego* (*Angel of Fire*, 1991) tells the story of a young girl called Alma ('soul' in Spanish) who works as a fire-eater in a shabby circus on the outskirts of Mexico City, is made pregnant by her father, a dying clown, and after his death joins a nomadic troupe of religious puppeteers in the hope of winning God's forgiveness. All too late, Alma realises that an absent God will not answer her pleas.

Rich with biblical connotations, the relentless drama of *Angel de fuego* ends in a fiery note of apocalyptic despair. Rotberg keeps the shock potential of her story in check by avoiding melodramatic excess, while the harsh landscapes surrounding Mexico City provide an eerie beauty. Rotberg worked for four years as assistant director to Felipe Cazals and *Angel de fuego* has drawn comparisons with the work of her Mexican predecessors as well as with foreign authors such as Bresson and Jodorowsky.

*Lolo* (1992), a first feature by Francisco Athié, is a sordid tale about the crime and punishment of a young worker who robs and brutally kills an old woman after he is laid off from his factory job. Although Athié's film falls short of its Dostoevskian pretensions, he does sustain a dream-like mood which reflects his protagonist's confused state of mind. Heavy with references to past Mexican classics – Ismael Rodríguez's popular melodramas of the 40s, Buñuel's *Los olvidados* – *Lolo* probes the underside of Mexican life through a truly Mexican style of film-making.

To make forecasts is a risky undertaking, but it looks as though this group of film-makers should be able to guarantee the survival of Mexican cinema into the first decades of the twenty-first century. That is, if film production isn't shut down for good in the next regime, and if the directors themselves are able to resist the song of the Hollywood siren.

How have Hollywood movies – and in particular the films of Sam Peckinpah – imagined Mexico, the land that lies on the other side of the border? By John Kraniak

## Stepping over the border

● The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) that put an end to the Mexican-US war was crucial for the construction of the myth of the West. Mexico lost approximately half its territory and the US gained Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, parts of Colorado and Texas, and California. In redrawing the frontier, the war produced much of the area in which were played out the dramas that created the myth of the West in cultural forms from dime novels to Hollywood. Thus began a remarkable history of US representations of Mexico – and not only in Westerns. In gangster films Mexico became a place to which outlaws escaped from the forces of the law or where it was possible to revel temporarily in a transgression of moral codes: to gamble, drink and whore – masculine pleasures in the main. In melodramas and comedies couples fled to Mexico to get married or divorced and in the openly nostalgic Westerns of the late 50s onwards Mexico became the sign of a West that had in effect disappeared. The frontier between the two countries was transformed into a horizon of possibility.

Of course, the problem was that since 1848 there could no longer be another West on the other side of the border, only Mexico. "Mexico lindo!" says Angel as Sam Peckinpah's eponymous Wild Bunch reach the Rio Grande and look over the border. "Just looks like more Texas 'far as I'm concerned," responds the Texican Tector Gorch. It is the contradiction between this desire for the myth and the reality of the Mexican nation-state that has made the border zone such an unstable, violent and attractive place. As in Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil*, the legal and illegal are inextricably intertwined in the border towns of San Diego and Tijuana. The US detective Quinlan plants evidence and assassinates in the name of the law and is right; his counterpart Vargas must resort to treachery to uphold it, and is wrong.

And the more the border divides, the more it also joins. In early 1992 the local US authorities built 12 km of a new Border Wall separating San Diego and Tijuana. It is made from corrugated iron sheets used for the temporary landing strips of Operation Desert Storm. On it a protester has sprayed: "Ni ilegales, ni criminales/Trabajadores internacionales" (Neither illegal, nor criminal/International workers). Years before, after the Vietnam defeat, according to Paul Virilio in his book *War and Cinema*, the electronic MacNamara Line – "consisting of fields of acoustic... and seismic... detectors" – was transferred to the Mexican-US border "with the supposed aim of detecting illegal immigrant workers". The border zone, crossed in both directions by capital and desire, is thus constituted as a sensory field that is both acoustic and visual. *Son et images*: the raw mate-



rials of the film industry. It should come as no surprise that Hollywood was founded in this border area – just next door to Mexico, one of the industry's most important fictions – by film impresarios escaping the law of copyright.

It is perhaps no surprise either that from this location Hollywood fabricated a series of racist stereotypes to populate its fictional Mexico: from the greaser through the blood-thirsty *bandido* to the meek and cowardly *peons*. Most commentators see the representations of Mexicans in the films of Peckinpah as fitting into this mould – quoting, for example, the mass slaughter of Mexican soldiers at the end of *The Wild Bunch*, the objects and means of the outlaws' bid for glory through death. But *The Wild Bunch* in fact confronts both the myths of the West and of the Mexican Revolution through a dramatisation of the pathology of masculine heroism and of violent authority.

*The Wild Bunch* begins with a failed bank robbery and a shoot-out that turns into a civilian massacre, after which the bunch are pursued over the US-Mexican border by a group of bounty hunters led by Thornton – a former partner of the bunch's leader Pike. In northern Mexico the revolution is being fought out by the Federal forces of Mapache, the forces of Pancho Villa and Indian guerrilla forces. The bunch strike a deal with Mapache to steal arms from the US forces patrolling the border but allow their member Angel to keep a box of guns for the Indian guerrilla forces he supports. But their Mexican dream is shattered by the sexual and political rivalry between Angel and Mapache. Mapache tortures and kills Angel; the bunch decide to turn their backs on the money and affirm Western codes of masculine solidarity by killing Mapache. A massacre ensues in which the bunch are killed. The end of the film suggests two possible futures: the kind of freedom represented by the guerrilla forces (remember Vietnam – Peckinpah once said of his film that it represented what happens "when killers go to Mexico") or the despotism represented by the child Federal soldier intoxicated by Mapache's bravery who finally kills Pike and survives.

Stereotypes may be the currency of many Hollywood films, but Peckinpah was far from being a conventional Hollywood director. He took a genuine interest in Mexican novels, photography and popular music, and episodes in Buss Kulik's *Villa Rides* (1968), written by Peckinpah and Robert Towne, have their origins in Martin Luis Guzmán's *El águila y la serpiente* (*The Eagle and the Serpent*, 1928), one of the most important novels of the Mexican Revolution (for example, the scene where revolutionary leader Pancho Villa's sadistic right-hand man Fierro guns down a group of prisoners for pleasure). Any stereotyping of Mexicans here has certain of its origins, then, in a common trope of the literature of the Mexican Revolution – the idea of the barbarous Villista masses – that is consolidated through class-based stereotypes in post-revolutionary Mexico. Thus a history of complex cultural mediations begins to make itself apparent, which if pursued I am sure would begin to undermine the notion of authenticity which the nationalist charge of



Searching for salvation: Warren Oates in 'Alfredo García'

stereotyping needs in order to have any political force. It is well known that during the revolution Villa himself performed for the camera, providing footage for Hollywood film companies (such newsreels provided Peckinpah with material for some of the battle scenes shot for *The Wild Bunch*, most of which were lost in the editing). At this level, then, the film becomes a dialogue about visual representations of the Mexican Revolution.

Peckinpah's most Mexican film is *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo García*. Its narrative is driven by a *corrido* – a kind of Mexican popular ballad – composed by Elita as she and her partner Bennie leave the tourist circuit in search of Alfredo García's grave. The *corrido* tells Bennie's story up to the events of the film and it is its echoes in Bennie's mind after Elita's death that motivate the rest of the narrative, namely the taking of Alfredo García's head to El Jefe, whose demand begins the action. The use of the *corrido* form also tells us that Bennie will die – not explicitly, but because traditionally *corridos* are composed to remember the dead. In this film, Mexican 'sound', the *corrido*, acts as a narrative support of the visual text.

The plot of the film has the simplicity and violence of popular Mexican melodramatic forms. Alfredo García has seduced and made pregnant the daughter of El Jefe, a powerful landowner who insists on exacting despotic revenge, ostensibly for the stain on his family's honour. He offers a \$1 million dollar reward for the seducer's head and his employees set out to fetch it. They come across Bennie, who believes this may be his "ticket", his "way up". In the event he destroys his own life and that of Elita: everyone dies in this film, even El Jefe.

The story begins with the question "Who is the father?", asked by El Jefe of his daughter. The answer, "Alfredo García", extracted in a spectacle of patriarchal violence, visibly disappoints him both as a challenge to his sense of paternal authority and because of what he perceives as García's betrayal. As El Jefe mutters, "He was like a son to me." García has transgressed familial law and must pay for it.

After the deaths of Elita, most of García's family and El Jefe's intermediaries, Bennie delivers García's head on the day of the baptism of El Jefe's grandson. Motivated by revenge and addicted to the power with which he is endowed by his revolver, Bennie refuses the reward and guns down the bodyguards. He then confronts El Jefe, whose daughter insists that he kill her father too. He does, and leaves

with the head and the money. Finally, he too is riddled with bullets by El Jefe's employees.

The critic Raymond Bellour once described Hollywood as a "machine for the production of the couple". Nothing could be further from the case than *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo García*, which is full of broken couples and bodies and at whose narrative centre is a grave containing a macabre coupling with no future: the dead Elita and the headless Alfredo García. This theatre of death is another of Peckinpah's scenarios for the acting out of the pathology of masculine codes – the killing of the father (El Jefe) and castration (the beheading of García) – as well as for the violence against women so central to other of his films, in particular *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs*. Elita is the voice of some authority: she composes the *corrido*. She also represents the possibility (or threat) of social normalisation – in Hollywood terms, of the couple – and from the point of view of the Western, road-movie and thriller genres (elements in *Alfredo García*), of feminisation.

Bennie's determination to decapitate García (also an ex-lover of Elita) follows her attempted rape by a biker whom he kills. The beheading thus becomes the form through which Bennie will exact masculine revenge. The closer they get to the grave, the closer Bennie and Elita's relationship becomes. Once they arrive, however, the potential 'couple' is destroyed: as Bennie is about to cut off García's head, Elita is killed. Bennie leaves her body in pursuit of the head, which he eventually recovers. Now it occupies Elita's position next to him in the car. The head oscillates between being a bodiless buddy with whom Bennie converses, argues and drinks, and a non-transcendent piece of dead meat in a bloody bag covered with flies.

Yet despite its undoubted Mexican cultural specificity, the geographic specificity of the film is undermined by a text inserted towards the end as information that tells the audience that Bennie is leaving with García's head for El Jefe's hacienda, located in some unspecified place in Latin America. The significance of Mexico here is very different from in Peckinpah's other films, where the frontier acts as a horizon crossed either in a crazed assertion of US authority (*Major Dundee*, 1964) or to escape the law and the disappearance of the West (*The Wild Bunch*, *The Getaway*, 1972), or which is refused in an assertion of the myth of the West with which the characters die (*Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, 1973). *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo García* creates an ambiguous and mythic space out of Mexican materials, a border zone between the Mexico it so strongly refers to and the West it is not.

In this imaginary place constructed from both Mexican and US materials, there is no regeneration through violence. No one will remember Bennie's Song. Romantic heroics are instead exhibited as pathology and the search for glory and transcendence undermined by the slow-motion finality of the bullet-impacted body. Such scenes – the hallmark of Peckinpah's films – contain some critical content. But the price paid is high: in Peckinpah's post-West vision, there is no hope at the border.

*I would like to thank Tim Girven for his help*



## Rep is in retreat; the Electric is under threat. Sight and Sound asked Nick James to report on art-house cinemas in seven cities

● The Electric in Portobello Road, Britain's oldest commercially operating cinema, is in the hands of the receivers. The Everyman in Hampstead, which has long tailored its films in natty combinations, is rumoured to be considering an almost total reliance on bespoke new films. Meanwhile, the Scala in King's Cross, which has staved off the imminent closure threatened as a result of its prosecution for screening Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, remains in a perilous position.

Such cinemas are among the best known in London where, until recently, serious filmgoers could be expected to congregate in numbers. That desperate measures have been visited on all three marks an escalation of a process which has been going on since the mid 80s. At first it was a matter of cinemas which had struggled with daily mixed programming, such as the Ritzy in Brixton, switching to all-week runs of new films. More recently, cinemas which derive their reputations from the programming style known as repertory are facing tough economic decisions. Clearly, repertory is in retreat.

In its archetypal form, repertory offers a different strand of films each day in double or triple bills. A typical Everyman programme from February 1990 ran like this: Thursday *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*; Friday *Heathers* plus *Parents*; Saturday *sex, lies and videotape* plus *Dangerous Liaisons*; Sunday matinee *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* plus *Metropolis* plus *Pandora's Box*; Sunday evening *Tampopo* plus *Babette's Feast*; Monday *Thérèse* plus *Les Anges du pêche* plus *The Passion of Joan of Arc*; Tuesday *Double Indemnity* plus *The*

*Postman Always Rings Twice* plus *Mildred Pierce*; Wednesday *Mystic Pizza* plus *Beaches*. The Electric or the Scala would have added a Saturday late double bill to the mix. The idea was that those with a particular interest in cinema, the true cinephiles, would want to see as much cinema as possible on the big screen. Rep's virtue was that it took snapshots through film history, plumbing the depths of available prints.

The idea that rep in Britain's capital might be restricted to the Riverside Hammersmith and the NFT prompted a desire to discover why rep no longer seems viable. Film writers in seven major cities investigating their local specialist cinemas discovered that while much of the rich mix of rep has been watered down to the point where the completist train-spotter ethos has been all but abandoned, new strategies for maintaining a sense of cinema outside the mainstream have emerged.

For me, the terms for such a cinema – independent, alternative, art-house – are fraught with confusion. Most cinemas outside London depend on local subsidy and/or BFI support, both of which come with bureaucratic strings attached. They can therefore hardly be described as independent. Alternative is more accurate, but is too hopelessly tied to the 60s ethos. That leaves art-house – the term most used by the industry and the most difficult to pin down. Cinemas such as the Everyman in London or the Filmhouse in Edinburgh typify what we think of as art-house cinemas, and it's arguable that repertory played a large part in forming that image. Certainly the image of an art-house film seems to have shifted over the decades from something deadly earnest in black and white with subtitles to something polished and colourful, possibly violent and sexy, that carries its sense of artistic prestige purely from being perceived as a quality product. The challenge for the managers and programmers of cinemas is to adapt their programmes and buildings accordingly.

Under threat is a particular and much-loved

cinemagoing lifestyle. My own addiction to cinema was confirmed at an all-night *film noir* programme at the Scala in 1982. The five films shown have merged into a single passionate epic in my memory, aided in part by the fact that Robert Mitchum starred in three of them. The stepped platforms below the entrance level had no seats and these wooden terraces were the favourite spot for friends to drink the night away in a near-dream state.

While beer and bare floors were probably peculiar to the Scala, the atmosphere of relaxed fandom, surplus raincoats and styro-foam cups is instantly recognisable to serious cinephiles. At film theatres in most major cities a culture of enthusiastic amateurism had evolved which is now deeply unfashionable, and, to coin a phrase, not economically viable. As Everyman manager Peter Howden explains: "Rep was started in an age of innocence. Nobody in the late 60s and 70s was in business. You just lived from one week to the next and nobody cared about cash projections. You got the money at the door and spent it on making improvements... putting the seats back together. Now it's more boring. You still lurch from crisis to crisis, but the trouble is they're not very interesting crises."

The boost in cinema attendances in the late 80s, achieved largely by the multiplexes, has shown that filmgoers have become more responsive to high-quality technical presentation, to THX or Dolby SR sound systems, highly reflective screens and accurate floor rake. The multiplexes were built in response to the massive proliferation of home video, and by the early 90s their prime target audience of 18 to 24-year-olds was one which had grown up with VCRs. It is true, according to most of the managers and programmers interviewed for this article, that even the cinephile part of this audience has no particular preference for seeing films on the big screen rather than at home. They disagree, however, as to whether sell-through video, as recently embraced by art-

# DAYS OF INDEPENDEN



house distributors, is a factor in rep's decline. It's more the case that home taping of rep staples such as *Rumble Fish* and *Paris, Texas* has killed off a large part of their repertoire.

Unlike some of the threatened London cinemas, those in other cities always play a role as the purveyors of new films as well as of cinema history. As such they are able to be more flexible in their response to commercial pressures, an important factor since they are the cinemas most affected by multiplex competition.

Yet cinemas such as the Tyneside in Newcastle have learned the painful lesson that new art-house films are finding fresh routes to the public. Mainstream distributors are buying the likes of *Reservoir Dogs*, *Damage* and *Strictly Ballroom* and running them concurrently in the multiplexes and art houses. The distributor-inspired breakdown of what was a cosy situation for the regional art houses, who at one time could be sure to get all the films they would wish to run, means that it is more essential than ever to retain a loyal audience and do their best to sell every part of the programme.

The heightened atmosphere of commercial imperative leaves even the subsidised theatres in a tricky position. Most of them have an educational remit to fulfil which is also a factor in retaining BFI support. On the one hand, they must continue to get good audiences if they want first-run art-house films from the distributors. On the other, they can't be seen to duplicate the role of mainstream commercial cinemas or they'd risk losing the programming, print and publicity support of the BFI's regional programming unit.

At the educational end of this dilemma is a cultural anxiety: if rep programming disappears, where will you be able to see the classic cinema of the past as exemplified by the *Sight and Sound* critics' top ten list? Cinema programmers such as Judy Dames at the Midland Arts Centre say that they can get audiences for film classics such as *La Règle du jeu*, but not enough reliable or affordable prints to make intensive

programming of such films work. This puts the onus on those independent distributors who are prepared to take the risk of putting out expensive re-issues. Otherwise, access to the film canon will be increasingly maintained by on-site video shops such as those maintained at Filmhouse and the Tyneside.

In the case of new films, the dilemma is more acute. Multiplexes such as the MGM in Stockport are experimenting with a single art-house-devoted screen, but not in any big way. The real threat comes from the way art-house films have gained value in the mainstream. There have always been films that have crossed over to a wider public, but increasingly the kind of films being picked up by the main art-house distributors – Artificial Eye, Electric and Metro Tartan – seem chosen for their crossover potential, with the result that mainstream and art-house cinemas find themselves struggling over the same film. Ironically, it is films in this area – for example, *Betty Blue*, *Blue Velvet* and the *Jean de Florette/Manon des sources* pairing – that do well in the art houses and therefore often appear again and again in their programmes. Yet for Pete Buckingham of Recorded Pictures, whose company runs the Cameo in Edinburgh and has just announced the redevelopment of the Brixton Ritzy into a five-screen complex, art-house and crossover films constitute an under-exploited market.

Against considerable cynicism from other operators, Buckingham is claiming that there are more than enough suitable films to run his five-screen complex. "We went through the list of 1991 releases and there were 68 that we classified as art house, not on what we would have played, but on the number of films that were released in art-house cinemas. That's more than one a week. Add to that borderline films such as *Grand Canyon* and *Peter's Friends* and there are more than 100 a year."

As Buckingham sees it: "The last bastions of the single-screen cinema in this country are the art houses, and they can continue to subsist

because they haven't had any proper competition. While mainstream cinema exhibition has gone through a huge revolution so that multiplexes now have 60 per cent of the market share, there hasn't been any art-house investment into the sort of comfort and services that the mainstream operations are giving, primarily because the buildings themselves resist these changes."

## BIRMINGHAM

Catherine O'Flynn

### The Triangle

Capacity: 177

Prices: £3.50 (£3 students and members, £2.50 concs), matinees Mon-Fri £2.50

### The Midland Arts Centre

Capacity: 144

Prices: £3.50 (£2.75 concs), matinees £2.25, children's films £1.75

For a city still perceived as aesthetically challenged, Birmingham is well served by two specialist cinemas. The Triangle, situated on the north side of the city centre, is a long-established alternative cinema. Subsidised by Aston University and supported by the BFI, it tends to get the lion's share of art-house first runs such as *Bad Lieutenant*. The smaller cinema in the Midland Arts Centre, set in the pleasant surroundings of Cannon Hill Park, makes creative use of second-run availability to lure a broader audience to art-house movies. Discussions are in progress for the two cinemas to co-ordinate their programmes and they have already collaborated on a Celluloid Sinatra season.

Cuts in education funding combined with pressure from distributors for longer runs have dampened the risk-taking elan of the Triangle's early days. The typical mix now is for films like *Bad Lieutenant* or *Unforgiven* to support the more traditional Buñuel or Cassavetes seasons. As programmer Pete Walsh explains: "We do far less rep now than before, partly because of ►

# DENCE





PHOTOGRAPHS BY IAIN STEWART

◀ the increase in the minimum cost guarantee charged by distributors for old prints." On the other hand, following MGM's decision to abandon the idea of devoting one screen of the city's multiplex to a "Cutting Room" experiment of art-house programmes, mainstream competition for first-run films has all but disappeared. Utilitarian but comfortable, with a basic snack bar catering mainly to serious men in beards, the Triangle is a fun place with an infectious atmosphere of film fanaticism.

If the Triangle's clientele are true believers, then the Midland Arts Centre, subsidised by Birmingham City Council and the West Midlands Arts Association, preaches largely to the unconverted in the hope of increasing the audience for art-house or classic films. Thus the release of Walt Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is seen as an opportunity to show *La belle et la bête*, which then leads into a mini-season of Cocteau. By exploiting such opportunities to mix the popular and less familiar, programmer Judy Dames has increased overall attendances.

"I haven't been doing it for very long," admits Dames, "but by showing films in runs shorter than a fortnight and then bringing them back I've managed a 20 per cent increase. I probably show more conventional films than the Triangle but also, as part of an arts centre, I programme films that relate to what's going on in other parts of the building. As part of Birmingham's Towards the Millennium celebrations we showed a season of 20s films such as *The Jazz Singer*, Hitchcock's *Blackmail* and some Buster Keaton."

Whether she's screening *Howards End* or New

Queer Cinema, Dames programmes for mood slots, making provision for serious solo mid-week visits as well as more lightweight weekend nights out. There's also room for a little old-fashioned enthusiasm: the rise in art-house video is not seen as a threat, but rather as a chance to show *La Règle du jeu* on the big screen to those initiated by VCR.

## CARDIFF

David Prothero

### Chapter

Capacity: Screen 1: 194, Screen 2: 68

Prices: matinees £1.20, early evening £3 (£2 concs including members Sun-Thur), evenings £3.50 (£2.50)

Chapter is a subsidised twin-screener in a busy, barely out-of-town arts complex. Manager and programmer Linda Pariser's strategy is to plug the gaps left by Cardiff's high-street cinemas: "to be different from them." Chapter screens a first-run feature nearly every day drawn from a fairly standard selection of fringe and foreign new releases together with relevant rep material, quality second runs and re-release classics. A stress on support information, theme and context testifies that Pariser – who arrived 18 months ago – aims to re-emphasise an educational remit.

The attitude to Chapter from the city centre screens has been dismissive. Cardiff doubled its in-town auditoria in 1991 with the five-screen Capitol Odeon, but with a few failed foreign-language days behind them, mainstream man-

agers have opted to fill surplus screen space with duplicate titles rather than more marginal movies. In the past five years Chapter has increased its potential to attract first-run movies by lengthening play dates. The increasingly youth-oriented nature of many recent debuts – for example, *Reservoir Dogs* and *Man Bites Dog* – has further boosted its status.

Chapter's top earner for 1991-92 was *Delicatessen*. With all but two of its 14 Screen 1 nights sold out, *Reservoir Dogs* was the big success of the last financial year and was subsequently screened at the Capitol. Realising that more errant product – for example, Almodóvar, *Akira*, *Slacker*, Hartley, *Man Bites Dog* – would not travel as well, Chapter has earned exclusive rights to a series of attractive draws. An ill-equipped city centre passed on *Bad Lieutenant*; Pariser predicts capacity for it at Chapter. She believes that films such as *The Crying Game* and *The Public Eye* would have done better as Chapter first runs and hopes to attract such titles to the cinema in future.

Pariser is unworried by the increased availability of art-house video titles, arguing that: "If video increases cinema literacy, that can only be a good thing." She points out that video has made viewers more aware of screen ratios, heightening their desire to see movies in optimum formats. She would sell tapes from the box office if she could.

Chapter's systematically revamped auditoria have contributed to its success: city-hopping punters noted that *Reservoir Dogs* in Chapter Screen 1 Dolby beat Capitol hands down. A high-visibility downstairs bar seeks to make





film-going more of a night out than the circuit cinemas manage, though some of Chapter's regulars claim to have problems with the bar's snooty atmosphere.

Chapter will publish its cinema programme monthly in a separate brochure from September 1993 and Pariser hopes that the shorter lead times will enable her to respond more dynamically to television programming – the real competitor in educative scheduling – and to tussle more wholeheartedly with town centre trends. A Europa bursary to promote continental films is also seen as a means of enhancing the cinema's profile.

## EDINBURGH

Alan Morrison

### The Cameo

Capacity: Screen 1: 253, Screen 2: 75, Screen 3: 66

Prices: Screen 1: £4.15 (99p before 5.30pm, half price Mon £2.07), Screens 2 and 3: £3.85 (99p before 5.30pm, half price Mon £1.90)

### Filmhouse

Capacity: Screen 1: 285, Screen 2: 101

Prices: matinees £2 (£1.50 concs), early evening £2.50 (£2), evening £3.60 (no concs), bargain Wednesday matinee 50p

The expansion from one to three screens of Edinburgh's commercially run Cameo in 1991 has had a mixed effect on the nearby Filmhouse. Establishing a reputation for showing accessible art-house and specialist mainstream titles, the Cameo has snatched films such as

*Reservoir Dogs*, *Damage* and *Tous les matins du monde* from its neighbour and rival. The result, according to the Cameo's management, is a significant boost in overall art-house attendances in the city.

The Filmhouse has enjoyed good audiences for short second runs of similar films without denting its credibility as an alternative cinema. Plans to add a third screen should strengthen its potential to secure fought-over titles by enabling it to provide the longer runs that are required to appease distributors. The battlefield lies open for the successor to Jim Hickey, who moves on this summer after 14 years as the Filmhouse's director.

With a self-replenishing student audience, figures for repertory screenings in both cinemas have remained steady. Any slight drop can be attributed to an increase in the number of screens rather than to the video market. The Filmhouse is constantly expanding its video shop and according to Hickey: "Videos are in big demand. We carry over 200 titles and the shop has become a nice little earner."

The Filmhouse often uses repertory slots to tie in with film openings elsewhere in the city. "One of our jobs has been to create a context whereby people can see other films by the new film's director or on a particular subject," says Hickey. "Over the last few years this has begun to happen more often."

Helen Baker, manager of the Cameo, programmes between 35 and 40 rep films a month as late night and Sunday matinee double bills, but with some 50 per cent of rep tickets going out at the concessionary rate of 99p, the staple

**Audience choice: a Saturday night screening in Edinburgh at the Filmhouse, with its expertly balanced sound system, left, and at the Cameo, with "the best seating in Britain", above**

diet tends to be double helpings of routine choices such as the *Betty Blue/Blue Velvet* and *Jean de Florette/Manon des sources* combinations that have built-in box-office security. Classic titles have remained popular in Scotland despite wider availability on video and competition from seasons on BBC2 and Channel 4. "It's as if the audiences will go to the films they know of, that they may have read about in the history books or have perhaps even seen on television, but will not take risks on lesser-known titles," explains Hickey. As evidence he cites a recent Frank Sinatra season: while *High Society* had an audience of 228 and *The Manchurian Candidate* attracted 204 punters, *None but the Brave* managed only 12 viewers over four screenings. But Hickey believes that with its Scottish Film Council subsidy, it is the Filmhouse's role to persevere with the more unfamiliar end of rep programming.

Both cinemas enjoy a degree of loyalty from cinemagoers, who will wait for a film to arrive at the venue of their choice. The Cameo started a film club at the beginning of 1993, offering special events and free matinees to members, who already number 1,000. Such loyalty is due in part to the different atmospheres of the two cinemas. The Cameo has luxury seating and generous leg-room ("the best in Britain," it claims), while the Filmhouse boasts an expertly balanced Dolby SR sound system. As visitors to the Edinburgh Film Festival, which uses both venues, will know, the Filmhouse café-bar is ►



◀ a popular meeting place in its own right, while the Cameo bar, licensed until 1am, sets the tone perfectly for those midnight trips to the twilight zone.

## LONDON

Nick James

### Electric

Capacity: 438

Prices: £4.50 (£3 concs Mon-Fri and Sat before 4pm), children's matinees £2

### Everyman

Capacity: 287

Prices: £4.50 (£3.50 concs Mon-Fri and Sat/Sun before 4.30pm, under 15s £2.50)

### Riverside

Capacity: 200

Prices: £3.75 (£2.60 concs), children's shows: children £1.20, adults £2

### Scala

Capacity: 478

Prices: membership 50p per annum, seats £4.50 (£3 concs Mon-Fri before 4.30pm, children £2), late all-nighters £6

London's cinemagoers have constant recourse to new films and it is probable that changes in audience taste are magnified among them. The shrinkage of the repertory sector might not be so readily apparent in other UK cities, but it is legitimate to suppose that trends discovered in the capital will eventually have their impact elsewhere. Nevertheless, the sheer diversity of films available to Londoners makes them a fickle crowd, so the task of luring them back to repertory cinemas is much tougher.

Despite the success of their Droog in the Dock appeal in meeting the worst of their court costs, the Scala's long-term problems still seem insurmountable. Other factors peculiar to the King's Cross cinema are outlined by programmer Helen De Witt and former programmer Jane Giles. For example, until the Everyman lost its rent support, the Scala was the only repertory cinema without any subsidy whatsoever. De Witt and Giles are also among the few programmers who cite sell-through video as a threat. As Giles points out: "The videos that Artificial Eye, Electric and others put out are good value at around £15. If you're a couple and you're going out for the evening you've got travelling expenses, and then if you're going to eat out you're probably looking at at least £20. So in this recession, it makes sense to eat in and watch a video."

When the Scala moved to King's Cross in 1980 it was one of the few places where you could legitimately buy a drink after midnight, a situation which has changed since the clubbing boom in the late 80s. With its characteristic mix of gay, kitsch, sleaze, horror, 'B' movies and music-related special events, part of the Scala's success lay in providing a home-from-home for the denizens of the night, a situation which may now be rebounding against it.

Over the last few years the King's Cross area has acquired a reputation for crack dealing and prostitution. And the Scala's audiences for evening screenings have fallen off alarmingly – the total admissions to all screenings has

dropped from an average of 75,000 a year to 60,000 in 1992. For the Scala this is a double bind, since the cinema has never been able to attract audiences for the more genteel alternative films. What's more, according to De Witt, certain films have been placed out of bounds by the pricing policy of the Prince Charles cinema in the West End, which screens fairly new films such as *The Living End*, *Singles* and *Husbands and Wives* together with older films such as *Easy Rider* or *Star Wars* at only £1.99 a ticket.

As De Witt tells it: "The Prince Charles can say it will put on a film at 2pm one day, 4pm the next and 6pm a couple of days later. To a distributor that looks like a five-day run, whereas we can only offer a one-day booking. Yet we can take as much money in that one day as it does. All this affects how soon we can get a print." "Also," adds Giles, "if the Prince Charles plays *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* for a week, then everyone's seen it. We helped to break that film in this country. But while the Prince Charles didn't make that much money for the distributor, it annihilated the rep audience for the movie."

Since going into receivership, the Electric cinema in Portobello Road has also used De Witt as its programmer. Her programme, she says, "has surprised the receivers by making money, although not enough to save the cinema." Many of the Scala's staff are now doing shifts at the Electric and there's a sense that if the fates of the two cinemas are linked, it is possible something may survive.

Meanwhile, the Everyman faces its own dilemmas. Landlord Camden Council substantially increased the rent a couple of years ago, but gave back half the money in the form of a subsidy which has now been cut. The problem is compounded by a loss-making café/restaurant in the basement originally set up to be run by a commercial outlet, but returned to the Everyman when the controlling company fell foul of the council remit. As a result, the Everyman is increasing the number of weeks devoted to first runs and is rumoured to be thinking of abandoning weekday rep altogether. When asked to comment, Everyman board member and Electric Pictures head Liz Wren said: "We are looking at changing the mix, although we haven't come to a decision yet. But you can see the way it's going."

Other cinemas such as the Rio in Dalston, the Phoenix in East Finchley, Brentford's Watermans Centre and the Willesden Picture House share the ambience of rep houses and the characteristic mix of Sunday matinee double bills and weekday matinees to support first-run films, but daily rep survives only at the National Film Theatre, the Everyman, the Electric, the Riverside and the Scala. As a national institution, the NFT is insulated from the vagaries of fashion, but subject to an entirely different set of pressures. Attached to MOMI, its primarily curatorial function towards cinema as heritage puts it beyond the scope of this report. The question of where else in the capital classic cinema can be seen is addressed by Robert Rider, who programmes the cinemas at the Barbican.

According to Rider: "Repertory is not neces-

sarily the best way of showing more 'obscure' films. At the Barbican we've been able to get substantial houses for films that have hardly been seen here through big thematic seasons such as our 50 Japanese Films season or Scandinavian season. You are much more likely to get an audience for, say, an early Depardieu movie if it is contextualised within a Depardieu season." The same approach, on a smaller scale, is taken by the ICA Cinematheque.

Ed Lewis of the Riverside Centre in Hammersmith intends to continue with rep-style programming, utilising good contacts with the National Film Archive and BBC to ensure a supply of quality prints. "I'd like to persevere with rep," says Lewis, "particularly if it's going to get to the state where we are almost alone in doing so. The only advantage we have is that we operate in a subsidised building. Over the last year we've lost about 8 per cent of our audience and I attribute that to the recession, but I do think that in the long term what's affecting the rep houses is that all the independent distributors for art-house films have set up video arms and are releasing their films quickly on video."

"At one time the only place to see foreign-language films after their initial run was in rep. But that's simply not the case any more. In terms of print quality, what video means is that if you're used to watching a nice clean print at home on your video, then you expect if you're paying money elsewhere to see good basic quality. The mistake of the rep houses has been to play prints long after they've been run into the ground."

## MANCHESTER

Mike Barnett

### Cornerhouse

Capacity: Screen 1: 300, Screen 2: 170, Screen 3: 58

Prices: £3.50 (concs £2.50), matinees £2.95 (concs £1.95)

Cornerhouse has been in existence for only eight years, in which time it has become the hub of social life for Manchester's art lovers, film fanatics and those who like to be seen around town. It has three art galleries, a bar and a café, all functionally minimalist in style, and is conveniently situated for the city's huge student population.

Greater Manchester's 20 million people are served by 92 screens on 21 sites. At Belle Vue, two miles east of the city centre, sits Britain's biggest multiplex, a 14-screener operated by National Amusements of Massachusetts. The Odeon, just 200 yards away from Cornerhouse, is now the only mainstream cinema in the city centre. A fourth screen was added last year, giving it the flexibility to pick up films which in the past would automatically have gone to Cornerhouse. *Howards End* opened there, running for four months, and in recent months *Grand Canyon*, *The Player*, *Bad Lieutenant*, *Husbands and Wives* and *Glengarry Glen Ross* all ran at the Odeon before subsequently being screened at Cornerhouse.

Cornerhouse's cinema director, Sandra Hebron, is aware of the changes in the market



place and programmes accordingly. But she insists, "I don't just take anything second run," preferring to pick up a comparatively neglected film such as *Ruby* and programme related material around it. As Hebron sees it: "The last Godard and Fellini films didn't even receive UK distribution; smaller independent distributors can't afford to take risks. There is still an audience, but it is of limited size. It is important for us to show classic cinema and to show it to a new audience within a broad programming context." Last year a number of organisations staged a Manchester Italian week, including an Italian parade through the city centre. "It gave us the chance to screen Fellini's *La dolce vita* alongside Maurizio Nichetti's *Volere Volare*," says Hebron.

The sizeable audience for films other than the standard releases is something the multiplex operators are also discovering. The eight-screen MGM at Salford regularly shows popular classics such as *Ben Hur*, *Singin' in the Rain* and *Doctor Zhivago*, albeit for one day only. The 10-screen MGM in Stockport began an experiment in March called "Cutting Room" whereby a single screen is devoted to art-house movies. The run opened with *The Waterdance* and manager Hugh Brown says he is "encouraged by the response." There can't be many multiplexes that have screened the new print of Buñuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*.

Hebron doesn't see the Stockport experiment as a threat: "They're not, as yet, competing with us for first-run art-house material." Cornerhouse is still the natural home for films from the independent distributors and Hebron sees no reason why this shouldn't continue. "After all, these films are our bread and butter. But times are changing."

## NEWCASTLE

Nick James

### The Tyneside

Capacity: Screen 1: 365, Screen 2: 155  
Prices: evenings £3.50 (£3 students, £2.50 discounts), double bills £4 (£3.75 students, £3 discounts), late shows £4 (no concs), children's shows £1.75 (adults £2.50), all other performances £3 (discounts £2.50)

Situated in a beautiful art deco building in Newcastle's main high street, directly opposite a four-screen Odeon, the Tyneside suffers from all the competition a prime site brings. On the other side of the Tyne bridge in Gateshead is a UCI 10-screen multiplex; nearer still is a Warners with nine screens.

In the past, when the Odeon was the only other cinema, the Tyneside could be sure of getting every art-house release on a first-run basis. But over the last few years programmer Briony Hanson has witnessed a gradual intrusion into what used to be regarded as the Tyneside's exclusive territory.

As Hanson sees it: "When the multiplexes were built, we thought, 'let's not worry about the competition'. As far as people this side of the river are concerned, Gateshead might as well be on another planet, while the Warners multiplex is on a difficult site – if you're on foot

you have to walk some creepy lanes and over a footbridge. What we noticed at first was that the multiplexes would have occasional screenings of films we regarded as ours – foreign-language films such as *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Delicatessen*, but not on a first-run basis."

"With first runs we started to notice a change when Virgin hummed and hawed about giving us *sex, lies and videotape*. We were amazed – it had no recognised stars and looked a bit risky, so we had almost assumed it would be ours. Only at the last minute did Virgin agree to let us have it. Not long after that, *Wild at Heart* ran concurrently at Warners. We still did well on it, not least because their roadside sign advertised, 'Wild At Hart', but it marked a significant change. We used to run films from Monday to Sunday but with *Wild at Heart* we had to switch to a Friday opening in order to have the same opening night as Warners. We've had to stick to that ever since."

The Tyneside approach to back-catalogue film is to present thematic and contextual seasons such as Violent Times, which traced the threads of the 'new violence' back to *Straw Dogs* and *Taxi Driver*, or Fire and Ice, a season of Catherine Deneuve films built around the release of *Indochine*. For Hanson, it's all about avoiding any sense of worthiness. "We use different ways of integrating film history. I see our approach as light-hearted. We have an enormous commitment to this sort of thing – for example we are about to screen *The Birth of a Nation* – but we like to present it in a non-worthy fashion, in exciting seasons or as special events. The way to get round resistance is to have trend appeal."

With its huge student audience to draw on, the Tyneside is still the fashionable place to see films in Newcastle, fending off competition even from the Odeon opposite. Recently both *Howards End* and *Used People* ran at the Odeon. Hanson did perfectly well with a second run of *Howards End* but laments what happened to *Used People*, arguing that had she had the opportunity to contextualise Beban Kidron through the Tyneside's lush programme booklet, she could have achieved more with that film.

As it was, as Hanson tells it, "I was there with a friend on the opening night and there were eight people in the audience, two of whom hadn't paid." The message seems to be that certain films still do better at the Tyneside.

## NORWICH

Lindsey Moore

### Cinema City

Capacity: 230  
Prices: £3.50 (£3 subscribers and members, evening concs £2.50, afternoon £1.10), children's screenings £1.30

A swing in informed film-going towards high-gloss Hollywood movies has affected Norwich's Cinema City to the point where maintaining its original cultural remit – to show films that would not otherwise be seen in the region – has become a struggle. In a city where a significant proportion of the population is involved in higher education, it appears that notions of

diversity and crossover between high and low cultures have gained currency. As Kingsley Canham, Cinema City's manager, states: "The policy in the early days was to show the best of world cinema for a particular audience... now it's a question of satisfying various audiences' individual requirements."

Canham's programming targets mainstream 18 to 25-year-olds, the family group and those with specific interests – French cinema and opera being particular Norwich favourites. Monday to Wednesday caters to students, Thursday to Saturday to a more mature and county audience. Reflecting these group's disparate tastes, the week is split between two main features plus the usual set pattern of Friday late night cult and horror, children's Saturday matinees, Sunday afternoon classics and occasional archive and television material.

For Canham, the lack of classics and minority interest films reflects a failure of nerve further back in the exhibition chain: "The whole thing is becoming distributor led. If they fail to pick up a varied range of European films, then everything becomes very anglophone." François Ballay at the Arts Cinema in Cambridge agrees: "If distributors won't open European films, we can't show them. The pool of material available for revivals and retrospectives is decreasing all the time."

Cinema City receives a total grant of £65,000, £39,000 of which is a direct grant from the BFI. "We receive programming, booking services and regional publicity, which is very useful for a single-screen operation like this. The trade sees the BFI group as a coherent sector." Cambridge Arts Cinema does not receive regular funding, although Eastern Arts has given money through a private trust. "Nobody is funding us to do education work," laments Ballay. However, the cinema has begun to exploit the resources of the university – for example, European Cinema of the Avant-garde, a recent season programmed in conjunction with the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, attracted large morning audiences for *Un Chien Andalou* and *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*.

The Cambridge Arts Cinema has operated as a commercial independent cinema since 1947, when it was opened by the private Arts Theatre Trust. Inaugurated in 1968, the Norfolk and Norwich Film Theatre was one of the first regional film theatres set up by the BFI to take the programming policies of the NFT beyond the capital. Ten years later it found a permanent home in the late fourteenth-century Suckling and Stuart Hall, renamed Cinema City. Among its more important achievements is an annual Women's Film Festival which this year boasts 44 titles including the first British screening of Diane Kurys' *Après l'amour* since its debut at the London Film Festival.

Despite obvious financial constraints, these cinemas survive, perhaps because of the comfortably home-grown atmosphere they provide. As one Cinema City regular told me: "You're not going to have popcorn-munching kids with their feet on the back of your seat."

*This is one of an occasional 'Sight and Sound' series on the state of cinema in the UK. Next: funding and Scottish cinema*



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# Graven images

I feel terribly churlish saying this, especially in a cinema magazine. But I've looked back over my life and I can't say I've been obsessed by any film. I'm not sure I even like cinema very much.

There may be cultural reasons for my cinephobia. As a Scot, a member of a 6 per cent ethnic minority in Britain, I'm particularly sensitive to the exercise of cultural power. As a post-Marxist I have to keep vigilant against seduction by my political enemies. I also have very little fat on my bottom and find long sittings in cinemas an ordeal. I have a short attention span and hate naturalistic narrative. Am I the only person with these feelings? Should I seek medical help?

My suspicion of cinema may well be a relic of the fierce Calvinism of my ancestors. My grandfather, a member of the Plymouth Brethren, forbade my father and uncle to visit the cinema, citing the Old Testament's ban on the worship of graven images. Imagine growing up in the 30s and 40s without ever seeing a Hollywood film! Somehow this seems almost as great an achievement of cultural resistance as my mother's grandparents' feat of continuing to speak Gaelic until well into the twentieth century. Both Hollywood and the English language still reek to me of imperialism.

The other great evil for the Brethren was alcohol, and I'm always struck by those frightening adverts for Martini and Bacardi. Then the druggy iconography film companies use to represent themselves – Palace Pictures' gleaming heroin needles were particularly sinister – suggests that film people are all aspirational drug barons. Often the films which follow seem to have been written by cokeheads: the typical Hollywood high-concept movie, full of clever vigour and remorseless action but spiritually and emotionally dead, has to be a by-product of cocaine abuse. Cinema seems to turn writers, the humanist heroes of the pre-cinema age, into bound aphids, milked of their ideas in exchange for drugs.

I think of people like Kafka and Brecht, and how cinema treated them. Brecht dreamed of being a director and wrote many scripts. But his concept of the Smoking Cinema, in which proletarians would sit back in lucid detachment, puffing on cigars and engaging in dialectics rather than letting themselves be dragged into the action, never caught on. The most bitter experience of his life was his exile in Hollywood, culminating in an interview with the UnAmerican Activities Commission.

Kafka too has never been done justice on screen. Welles' *The Trial* turns the book's labyrinthine cabbalism into a stylish thriller. I haven't seen Soderbergh's *Kafka*, but the thought of Jeremy Irons as K is enough. I have seen brilliant theatrical readings of *The Trial*, though, which repay Kafka's own debt to Yiddish folk theatre. As Robert Bresson says in his *Notes on Cinematography*, "the mixture of true and false yields falsity (photographed theatre or CINEMA). The false when it is homogeneous can yield truth (theatre)."

Cinema evolved at the opposite pole, aesthetically and politically, from the stylisa-

**Suspicious of cinema, sympathetic to Warhol, Nick Currie (aka Momus), musician and composer, reflects on Ozu, Dreyer and Bruce Willis**

tion and detachment and respect for the audience shown by Brecht and Kafka. Cinema is Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* realised: a melding of sound and vision and drama in a horrible maelstrom designed to sweep away all resistance. It is the triumph of image over idea, of spectacle over sensuality. Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* and Brecht's *Kuhle Wampe* resemble each other because cinema forces them to express a single aesthetic.

The ultimate anti-Wagnerian must be John Cage. Instead of the focused power of overwhelming spectacle, Cage proposed an art which left life as inconclusive, random, complex and unpredictable as it found it. Some of us actually like life's indirection, and do not require 'directors' to put spurious shape and meaning into it. To those of us who think this way, cinema is life with all the interesting bits taken out. It strips the strangeness from everything. By this token all cinema is like *Look Who's Talking*, which gives a baby the voice of Bruce Willis. Cinema gives everything the voice of Bruce Willis (or Depardieu, or De Niro). When we see De Niro as Walter in Oliver Sacks' *Awakenings*, as Frankenstein and no doubt sometime soon as a quark in Spielberg's *A Brief History of Time*, we see a whole range of experience homogenised. And yet we know that many directors cannot make films without

big-name stars as security for their loans.

Was it always like this? Surely the early days of cinema were exciting? I read interviews with Carax and dutifully sought out Dreyer. I found his work heavy and slow and soporific. Entranced by the young Japanese director Kaizo Hayashi, I trekked in the rain to Croydon to see Ozu's *Tokyo Story*, hoping that the famous 'pillow shots' of traditional Japanese cinema would be a revelation. They weren't. I saw what I always see at the cinema: photographed melodrama. But from a lower angle.

Cinema is a product of the modern age, a sort of propaganda targeted at the industrial masses. Modernist cinemas were the factories in which value was reproduced. In post-modernism we have less respect and more choice. We zap through the cable channels looking at people's teeth and toupés. We no longer have the patience for narratives and messages. "I watch TV," said Andy Warhol, "and they have a 50s movie next to a 60s movie and a 70s movie. I look at the shoe styles." Warhol never realised his television ambition, a Cagian cable channel called 'Nothing Special' in which a camera would be aimed casually at a street corner. But we have plenty of Nothing Special around us. Especially when we dabble aimlessly with computers.

I got a real taste of what Méliès and the Lumière Brothers must have felt when I uploaded my first Quicktime movie by modem from a bulletin board. It took two hours to arrive over the phonline and ran for 20 seconds, a flickering, jerky box at the centre of my Mac screen showing the Rodney King beating set to a Tracey Chapman song. And yet it is precisely the weakness and pliability of multimedia which fills me with hope. Nobody will ever be bludgeoned by a Wagnerian CD-ROM. Computers put sound and vision at the disposal of the user, who becomes an editor and director, charting a unique way through a maze of video and music, words and annotations.

Less is more, and not just because with smaller budgets come greater freedoms. Opaque arts, arts which problematise and fetishise their own modes of representation (and anyone who has used computers knows they fit this dark category) offer richer possibilities for imagination and for the mastery of artists. Moving colour photography never struck me as a very interesting way of representing the world. I love, say, the games Picasso and Klee played with line. Few directors have taken the same liberties with film. I'm delighted to have worked with one of them. Derek Jarman's forthcoming film about Aids and blindness (boasting a Currie/Jarman composition called 'Cocksucking Lesbian Man'), uses only Yves Klein blue for its whole 90-minute duration. No images, no action and yet we see all the riches of Byzantium.

Maybe cinema missed its calling, got swept off-course by money and drugs. It's often struck me that with its photographic realism, its lingering attention to surface, its fetishistic concern for the details of clothes and flesh, cinema's true vocation has always been pornography.



Hardly Wagner: an early Georges Méliès image



# BOOKS

## It's all true

Lem Dobbs

### This Is Orson Welles

Orson Welles and Peter Bogdanovich, edited by Jonathan Rosenbaum, HarperCollins, £20, 533pp

At a time when a major new biography of Preston Sturges (by Diane Jacobs) perpetuates the calumny that Orson Welles prepared for *Citizen Kane* by repeatedly screening *The Power and the Glory* (in fact, *Stagecoach* was his film school); when Neil Jordan's screenplay for *The Crying Game* is widely acclaimed with hardly anyone remarking on Welles' earlier use of the key metaphor of the scorpion and the frog in *Mr Arkadin*; and when so-called 'new' versions of Welles films – such as the recently botched assemblage of *Don Quixote* – keep us hopping (and hoping), the emphatically titled *This Is Orson Welles* is truly overdue. Comprising a series of conversations conducted sporadically over a decade or so by his friend and disciple Peter Bogdanovich, this is an attempt to put the record straight by refuting the misconceptions that continually frustrated a career that began with such promise. "Think of all the years I could have salvaged," Welles bemoans – if only he had not fallen so hard for an art so costly.

The marvel of Welles was that his profound disappointment with the way things turned out never seemed angry or recriminatory. Supreme bafflement is his posture when recalling the mauling of *Touch of Evil* ("It's a very weird thing... I can't begin to fathom"), and he remains reluctant, even in the face of Bogdanovich's prodding, to characterise his former Mercury Theatre partner John Houseman as an enemy: "The truth is, you know, that I cling to the pathetic delusion that I don't have such things as enemies." At quite a price (a hastened demise, for one thing) Welles maintained in public the persona of the jovial fat man. He plays Falstaff to Bogdanovich's Hal: "I've never complained about Hollywood, but I'm not really one of the outstanding beneficiaries of the system [laughs]." We can just see those jowls quivering. Perhaps, as Bogdanovich remarks, Jean Renoir got to the heart of the matter when he pointed out that whereas most film directors are bourgeois, Welles was a rare aristocrat in a popular art form, and thus doomed to financial failure.

It's not all the familiar tale of woe. Buffs will delight in Welles' detailed comments on his many acting roles – even the obscure ones – and Bogdanovich forces out of him opinions on a multitude of other directors. But if much of this engrossing book reads like a plea from *Compulsion*'s dock ("I never saw *The Power and the Glory*. [Preston] Sturges never accused me of it – we were great chums"), by the end we may feel we've sat before *Moby Dick*'s pulpit, Welles' Father Mapple having delivered a lesson in perseverance, those booming tones still ringing in our ears.

And ring they might. True to its pedigree as a Welles production, years in the making, forever the subject of rumours, even believed lost (the vagaries of Bogdanovich's own career hobbled the project's progress). *This Is Orson Welles* has also been released in 'alternative' form, as a set of four audio cas-

settes of the original conversations (of variable sound quality and not exactly identical content to the book). Hence an interesting post-modern – or post-literate – predicament. The reader (listener?) enters a bookshop (talkshop?) and stands on the border between books-on-tape and the shrinking section that still stocks what we quaintly call printed matter, contemplating the purchase of a dialogue between two men, one of whom possessed the most famous speaking voice in the world. Which to choose? For me (who bought both), there's no contest: Jonathan Rosenbaum's splendid editing of the transcribed tapes is indispensable, along with rare photographs, informed notes, an appendix that reconstructs Welles' original version of *The Magnificent Ambersons* and an exhaustive chronology that entertainingly lists virtually every known appearance of the Voice and its master over 70 years (though not the Michael Parkinson chat show in the early 70s, for which I was part of the audience).

But there's another reason to plump for the book. There's a fine line between a conversation and a performance, between asking probing questions to elicit interesting answers and encouraging a loquacious guest to regale the company with stories. Few things are more boring than being trapped in a room with a well-known raconteur (Welles myth: that he was the model for William Keighley's *The Man Who Came to Dinner*) and Welles here, though mightily engaging, is at his most relaxed and anecdotal, treating his young friend as a pestering acolyte and thwarting the potential for discussion on a higher intellectual plane (see any Welles interview with a French film theorist). Bogdanovich stage-manages his subject well, but it's the reader who is the real host of this treasure trove. Welles a welcome captive between its pages whose wit and wisdom we can turn to at will, and at our own pace.

## Thoroughly modern

James Donald

### Raiding the Icebox:

#### Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture

Peter Wollen, Verso, £34.95 (hb), £10.95 (pb), 222pp

### Singin' in the Rain

Peter Wollen, BFI Publishing, £5.95, 72pp

In *Raiding the Icebox*, Peter Wollen offers an upbeat obituary for the Situationist International and the contribution of its militantly avant-garde theories of art to 60s radical political style. "The wasteful luxury of utopian projects, however doomed, is no bad thing," he concludes. "We need not persist in seeking a unique condition for revolution, but neither need we forget the desire for liberation. We move from place to place and from time to time. This is true of art as well as politics."

And equally true of Wollen. Implicitly, these books chart his restless journey from the BFI Education Department in the late 60s (when his *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* introduced structuralism and semiotics to a generation of students and teachers) to a chair in film at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1993. Although the *Singin' in the Rain* monograph incorporates many of

the ideas about modernism discussed in *Raiding the Icebox*, it is dedicated to his mentor at the BFI, Paddy Whannel, and harks back to old concerns: the re-evaluation of Hollywood in the light of auteurism, the responsiveness to genre in the studies of popular culture pioneered by Whannel and Stuart Hall's *The Popular Arts* in 1964, and the ethical importance attributed to self-reflexiveness in cinema from Godard on. It is in these terms that Wollen discusses the making of the film, its aesthetic strategies and its context (the artistic aspirations of the American stage musical, McCarthy's harassment of 'Popular Front culture', the end of the classic period for both Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley). Here, though, the categories are reworked through the prism of a later time and a different place.

The book opens with a meticulously conventional shot-by-shot analysis of Gene Kelly's 'Singin' in the Rain' solo. It ends in a uniquely Wollenesque sequence of knight's moves: back to Lessing's *Laocoon* and its proto-modernist theories about the forms of signification specific to different arts; forward to Arnheim's 'A New Laocoon', which blames the composite nature of talking film on the incompatibility between the movement of the human figure and dramatic speech; and then across to Kelly's joyous exploitation of this hybridity. What matters is less the insouciant erudition of the references than the wit with which they are marshalled to show how Kelly was able to "retain the popular appeal of tap, which he knew from his days in the clubs, while elevating it to the status of high art and expanding the audience to justify the production of a Hollywood film."

That circulation between 'popular' and 'high', and the 'high' plundering of 'popular' goodies, is central to *Raiding the Icebox*. In a vivid conclusion to his attack on Clement Greenberg's etiolated avant-gardism, Wollen argues that jazz "provided an early and dynamic example of the way in which modern art forms might be expected to develop, not as fixed entities with well-defined borders, but as practices that underwent complex mutations and crossovers as they pursued trajectories through very different situations and aesthetic levels. Jazz was able to penetrate the realm of high art while retaining its connections with vernacular culture and developing its own avant-garde." Here again, dance provides a paradigm of modernist antinomies. Nijinsky's *Scheherazade* reveals the split not just between West and East, but between functional and decorative, useful and wasteful, natural and artificial, masculine and feminine. In Siegfried Kracauer's analysis of dance troupes in the 20s (as in Chaplin's *Modern Times* and Walter Benjamin's thoughts on cinema), Wollen sees how such antinomies have structured both mass production and mass entertainment. But if the spectacle of the Tiller Girls duplicated the instrumental rationality of the Fordist labour process, "What form of bodily movement would correspond to a process of production that displayed a different, transformed rationality?"

Gene Kelly's, might be one answer. In *Raiding the Icebox*, though, the question leads Wollen to the idea that the history of modernism has been shaped by two poles of attraction: "On the one hand, a visionary utopianism, built around an ideal of ►



Man at the margins: Orson Welles in 'Touch of Evil', above, one of his many productions mangled by the Hollywood studios  
Cultural cross-overs: Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse, opposite, plunder 'high' and 'popular' dance forms in 'Singin' in the Rain'







◀ mass production, rational organisation and machine technology harnessed to an aestheticised sense of civic purpose; on the other hand, a fascination with the urban vernacular, with the entertainments, environments and lifestyles that grew up in the unplanned and chaotic milieu of the modern city." Again and again such tensions emerge as both topic and explanation: Constructivism versus Surrealism, Althusser's rationalist objectivity versus Debord's romantic subjectivism, Greenberg's purism versus the subversions of Andy Warhol or Jean-Luc Godard.

Wollen's sympathies lie with those who remember "the desire for liberation" and reject "the elevation of instrumental reason to an absolute." Appropriately, then, it is not his style to hammer home a single hypothesis. Instead, he builds up overlapping layers of narrative, information and argument whose organising logic becomes explicit only at the end of the book. Wollen, it transpires, was supposed to write about post-modernism. But he cringes at the word and its stiflingly Eurocentric connotations, and sees the phenomenon as no more than the surfacing of "subordinate aspects of modernism that had always been there" yet had been "written out of the orthodox version." Here he accepts too easily the current American orthodoxy, and so fails to notice that he shares many of his tastes and tactics with a European post-modernist such as François Lyotard. He also forgets a perfectly orthodox version of modernism he invokes earlier. Far from being repressed, ephemerality, contingency and marginality were central to the sociology of modernity and its urban vernaculars that Benjamin and Kracauer learned from Simmel. These are hardly negligible figures.

Although he might resent being mainstreamed in this way, it is in this tradition that Wollen belongs. Benjamin's description of Kracauer fits perfectly: "A rag-picker early in the dawn, who with his stick spikes the snatches of speeches and scraps of conversation in order to throw them into his cart, sullenly and obstinately, a little tipsy, but not without now and then scornfully letting one or other of these discarded cotton rags – 'humanity', 'inwardness', 'depth' – flutter in the morning breeze." Wollen too is best at deciphering the intricate surfaces of modern culture, and at showing how threadbare rags like 'post-modernism' have become. When he describes Jackson Pollock and Thelonious Monk as creating "meta-doodles of extraordinary virtuosity", he could be talking about his own reflections on cinema and modernity.

## Rank folly

Robert Murphy

**J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry**

Geoffrey Macnab, Routledge, £30, 270pp

It is more than 40 years since there was a biography of J. Arthur Rank. Given the crucial role he played in shaping the British film industry, it is time we had another. Geoffrey Macnab's book is competent, thorough and jauntily written. He makes good use of secondary source material and puts flesh on what some might consider dry bones through lively contributions from industry survivors. Alan Wood's book, *Mr*

*Rank*, published in 1952, started out by robustly defending its subject, but its author found it increasingly difficult not to be critical. The Rank Organisation did not approve. Subsequent writers were more amenable. George Perry's *Movies from the Mansion* and Quentin Falk's *The Golden Gong* are untroubled by journalistic integrity and give the impression that at Pinewood everything was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Macnab is an excellent writer and it would be a pity to bracket his book with such sycophantic claptrap; however, he is disappointingly discreet. The Religious Film Society, set up in 1933 with Rank as joint honorary treasurer, is presented as a bunch of bigots who would have regarded Mary Whitehouse as a dangerous liberal, yet Macnab insists that they did "sterling work". He relays stories confirming Sir John Davis' reputation as the unacceptable face of capitalism, but still describes him without irony as "a highly appropriate figure to head the Rank organisation" who "helped rescue British film."

Macnab's tolerance might be admired but for the fact that it leads him away from serious history into a never-never land where a benevolent patriarch (Rank) and a stern but fair autocrat (Davis) guided the flagship of the British film industry through troubled waters populated by piratical producers and crocodile-like critics. There is no examination here of the disparity between Rank's "guided by God" image and the shoddy reality whereby Odeon shareholders were made to pay for his disastrous 1947-48 production programme. And Macnab turns a blind eye to the absence in the home life of bad Sir John of those 'family values' foisted on Pinewood films.

There is no faulting the diligence of Macnab's research. There are fascinating sections on the 'B' movies produced at Highbury studios (Terence Fisher directing a Patrick Hamilton script, *To the Public Danger*) and on Rank's venture into animation (the young Bob Monkhouse helping to create Dusty the Mole, Corny the Crow and Ginger Nutt), as well as a detailed reassessment of Rank's relationship with his producers and his attempt to capture a world market. But unfortunately, Macnab's conceptual framework is naive – the 'mediocre man' theory of history in which Rank's limitations are his virtues, his drabness all the more reason for treating him with respect.

When Macnab does allow Rank's critics a voice, they are presented as spoilsports whose carping subverted the grand design. The Charm School, that laughably inept attempt to groom a stable of British stars, failed because "it was undermined by the producers" for whose benefit it had been set up. Harold Wilson is blamed for wrecking Rank's bid for the international market. Entertainment tax is blamed for sapping the life blood of the industry – even during the 20s and 30s when cinema building was booming and profits were high (Macnab seems not to realise that with 80 to 95 per cent of the films coming from Hollywood, it was essentially a tax on the screening of American films). And the losses of Rank's production programme in the late 40s are absolved by means of an inaccurate comparison with those of the government-funded National Film Finance Corporation.

Macnab declares himself in opposition to

"dewy-eyed British film historians, keen to make Ealing into Avalon, and to depict Rank as a capitalist heretic." But if such historians ever existed, they were answered well enough by *Mr Rank* in 1952. What *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry* does is to legitimise monopolistic folly.

## Life histories

Steve Neale

**Bio/Pics: How Hollywood**

**Constructed Public History**

George F. Custen, Rutgers University

Press, \$14.95, 304pp

Custen's book is the first sustained study of the Hollywood bio-pic. Its central argument is that for some 40 years Hollywood helped to construct an influential, but very partial version of "public history", integrating through its bio-pics episodes of selected individual lives into a "Hollywood view of history". One way this integration occurs is through a conventionalised view of fame which builds "a pattern of narrative that is selective in its attention to profession, differential in the role it assigns to gender, and limited in its historical settings."

Custen also claims that the bio-pic is now largely the province of television, which has significantly altered some of the genre's conventions and emphases. For instance, the TV bio-pic stresses the ordinariness of its subjects rather than their star-like qualities and often associates their achievements with a process of victimisation. These assertions are supported by extensive reference to studio archives (which also enables Custen to pinpoint the influence on the genre of producers such as Darryl Zanuck and George Jessel). His mapping of the field (by studio, by gender and ethnicity, and by the work of the bio-pic's subjects) is thorough, and he discusses an impressively wide range of movies.

Custen notes the dominance of Warner Bros and Fox in the production of bio-pics, the shift in the post-war period from figures associated with royalty, government and politics to those associated with the world of entertainment, and the ways in which female subjects tend to be chosen from these fields or from 'caring professions'. He offers some perceptive comments on the tension between the innovative individual (the novel entertainer, the reforming politician, the ground-breaking scientist) and established institutions and traditions. And he draws attention to the prevalence of montage sequences, which both mark stages in a life and chart the growth of public fame, and flashbacks, which frame and state the significance of both of these, particularly when accompanied by a voiceover.

However, *Bio/Pics* has its weaknesses. First, as seems customary these days, Custen takes 1960 as the point of demise of the studio system and the cut-off date for his discussion of Hollywood. This leads him to underestimate the endurance of the bio-pic in cinema (borne out by recent productions such as *JFK*, *Bugsy*, *1492: The Conquest of Paradise* and *Malcolm X*) and to overstate the dominance of the TV bio-pic. Second, the 1960 cut-off point means that Custen truncates a major cycle set in ancient times – movies such as *King of Kings*, *Cleopatra* and *Spartacus*. These are hybrids, combining ele-

The price of fame: Harry Guardino as Barabbas gets his come-uppance in 'King of Kings', Nicholas Ray's bio-pic of the life of Christ





ments of the Hollywood epic and the bio-pic. Such hybridisation is a characteristic of the genre, and is an element underplayed in Custen's book, which concentrates on dramas and musicals at the expense of war films, Westerns and gangster movies.

Gangster films are a crucial omission. The major cycle of gangster bio-pics that emerged in the late 50s is ignored, as is the fact that gangster movies from *Little Caesar* on have adopted bio-pic conventions. More important, the omission leads to a distorted impression of the bio-pic as a genre that deals with fame rather than notoriety and focuses on exemplary lives rather than on those which, nominally at least, are offered up for public condemnation.

The gangster film, along with other bio-pics of tyrants, villains and outlaws, has consistently functioned as the other side of the bio-pic's coin, not only ideologically, but also in terms of the organisation of its patterns of fantasy. The bio-pic centres on a self seeking or unwittingly finding fame and fortune. This self nearly always finds gratification, often marked by scenes of public display and approbation. In bio-pics of exemplary lives, the narcissism involved tends to be downplayed or treated as a temptation to be overcome: fame and fortune involve hard work and suffering, costs to the self. In the gangster film, narcissism is allowed free rein – which is why the gangster, who is usually male, has to get his come-uppance, but also why audiences find him so compelling and why the movies are frequently so ambiguous.

Despite his neglect of these aspects, Custen's book breaks new ground, not least in opening up the Hollywood bio-pic to further discussion.

## Spaced out

Andy Medhurst

### British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started

Lester Friedman (ed), UCL Press, £12.95, 352pp

Sometimes one is so caught up in one's own social or cultural circumstances that it becomes impossible to adopt a perspective. At such moments, it can be helpful to ask: how would this look to a visitor from outer space? For students of British cinema, that question is no longer purely rhetorical. The publication of this book demonstrates that the Martians have finally landed.

Unfortunately, the little green men and women forgot to pack any decent maps or phrasebooks when they blasted off for Planet Thatcher, with the result that, for the most part, their versions of events will be unrecognisable to its inhabitants. Here are some 'facts' offered about British cinema, culture and history: *Wish You Were Here* was set in East Anglia; the Kray twins "remain working-class heroes"; *Love Thy Neighbour* and *Mind Your Language* were BBC sitcoms; Clause 28 was introduced with the primary intention of "banning homosexual depiction in the arts"; one of the black people whose deaths led to the early 80s "riots" was called Blakelock.

Occasionally, the errors inadvertently offer a jolt of surreal delight, as when unfamiliarity with the British gay slang term "cottaging" leads one contributor to inform

us that Joe Orton liked having sex in "public toilets and cottages". The image conjured up of the insatiable playwright scouring rural England for a suitably thatched love nest is irresistible. There are a handful of essays written by scholars familiar with the British context; for example, Thomas Elsaesser, Andrew Higson and Peter Wollen contribute efficient overview pieces. But their voices struggle to be heard above the clamour of misrepresentations and misreadings. This is all the more frustrating since the subject is potentially so rich. During the 80s, as the tired post-war consensus was ruthlessly dismantled by the Thatcherite onslaught, British films acquired urgency and relevance anew.

Those qualities had not, however, always been absent. One of the book's sweeping assumptions is that until the 80s British films were, with sporadic exceptions, characterised by bourgeois literary stodge or polite documentary worthiness. This reductive view has recently been challenged by British scholarship; unfortunately, that substantial body of work receives little recognition here. Even worse, it is condescendingly asserted that British critics have fought shy of defending their pitiful cinema, turning their attention instead to Hollywood or Europe. This is news not only to the present writer, but to Charles Barr, Pam Cook, Raymond Durnat, Sue Harper, John Hill, Robert Murphy, David Pirie and others too numerous to mention.

In the first, less disastrous half of *British Cinema and Thatcherism* there are surveys of themes and genres, debates over the meaning of cinematic national identity, and an attempt to place films in context. The second half comprises studies of film-makers, beginning with black and feminist workshops, but soon settling for the auteurist option. Clearly, this period saw the emergence of some individuals whose films can usefully be analysed within an authorial framework: Peter Greenaway, for example. But to bestow creative autonomy on the likes of Stephen Frears when a more logical candidate such as Bill Forsyth is not named once is baffling. Mike Leigh is also woefully neglected. *High Hopes*, his most blatantly anti-Thatcherite project, is covered, but the more subtle *Meantime*, his most tragically funny film, is not. Too many key 80s films which cannot be subsumed under an authorial rubric, such as *Dance With a Stranger*, *A Private Function*, *Business As Usual* and *Empire State*, are either inadequately mentioned or omitted.

Laudable as the social context approach is, too many contributors slip into naively reflectionist accounts. A sense of panic characterises certain essays as their writers, mindful of the stark equation implied by the book's title, dig for subtexts ranging from the overly ingenious to the frankly bizarre. A vertiginous peak is reached when we are asked to consider the sex-and-horror shenanigans of Ken Russell's *The Lair of the White Worm* as indicative of "the historical erosion of Britain's political power that Thatcherism seeks so strenuously to deny."

Mary Desjardins' intelligent essay on discourses of motherhood in *Hope and Glory* and *The Krays* deserves a better setting. Otherwise, this collection is more interesting as a demonstration of American academic imperialism than a contribution to the study of British cinema.

## shorts

### Daphne du Maurier

Margaret Forster, Chatto and Windus, £17.99, 455pp

Forster's meticulously researched account of the life and work of the reclusive novelist provides a fascinating insight into the links between du Maurier's fantasy life and her stories. Her analysis of *Rebecca*, below, which was instantly successful when it appeared in 1938, reveals the compelling combination of suspense and dream narrative which appealed to Hitchcock. Forster concentrates on the novels themselves rather than their film adaptations.



BFI STILL, POTTER AND DESIGNS

### Potter on Potter

Graham Fuller (ed), Faber and Faber, £12.99, 171pp

A collection of interviews with playwright, novelist and film-maker Dennis Potter, one-time *enfant terrible* of small-screen drama. Fuller's introduction locates Potter's work in the changing arena of British television, showing how his shift towards film-making is the result of the historical transformation of the domestic medium. In a discussion of the controversial *Blackeyes*, Potter defends himself against charges of sexism.

### Black Popular Culture:

#### A Project by Michele Wallace

Gina Dent (ed), Bay Press, \$18.95, 372pp

This anthology in the award-winning 'Discussions in Contemporary Culture' series emerges from a 1991 conference in New York of black artists, scholars, critics and producers from the US and Britain. Covering film, literature, music and the visual arts, presentations and discussions range over topics such as the formulation of a black aesthetic, sexuality, and post-nationalism and essentialism. Contributors include Stuart Hall, bell hooks, Michele Wallace and Isaac Julien.

### Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis

Barry Salt, Starword, £16.50, 351pp

A second, expanded edition of this history of the relationship between style and technology in cinema, which was first published in 1983. Salt's revisions include new chapters on the 70s and 80s and additional material on the pre-1915 period. However, the wholesale rejection of post-60s film theory which is the subject of his opening chapters still stands.

### Celluloid Power: Social Film Criticism from

#### 'The Birth of a Nation' to 'Judgment at Nuremberg'

David Platt (ed), The Scarecrow Press, £72.50, 632pp

A collection of essays by radical writers covering the early years of cinema to the 70s. Contributors include Maxim Gorky on the Lumière Brothers, Bela Balasz and Jean Renoir on Chaplin, Jay Leyda on von Stroheim, Bernard L. Peterson Jr on Oscar Micheaux and Abraham Polonsky on *The Best Years of Our Lives*. The book pays tribute to those who have resisted censorship and worse in the cause of political idealism.



# REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

## Army of Darkness

USA 1992

Director: Sam Raimi

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

Guild

### Production Companies

Renaissance Pictures

Introvision

International

### Producer

Robert Tapert

### Co-producer

Bruce Campbell

### Production Co-ordinator

Anna-Lisa Nilsson

### Unit Production Manager

Eric Gruendemann

### Location Manager

Steve Garrett

### Post-production Supervisor

Gary Chandler

### 2nd Unit Director

Doug Leffler

### Casting

Ira Belgrade

### Assistant Directors

John Cameron

Sarah Addington

Steve Coatney

2nd Unit:

Robert Hume

### Screenplay

Sam Raimi

Ivan Raimi

### Director of Photography

Bill Pope

### Colour

Deluxe

### 2nd Unit Director of Photography

Ken Arlidge

### Video Playback Operator

Troy Stauffer

### Special Visual Effects

Introvision

International

### Director:

William Mesa

### Producers:

Andy Naud

Linda Landry-Nelson

Nick Davis

### Production

Co-ordinator:

Laura Luttrell

Stop Motion

### Supervisor:

Peter Kleinow

Puppet Creator:

Mike Joyce

### Sculptor:

Dan Platt

Draftsperson:

Dan Ross

Storyboard Artists:

Matsune Suzuki

James Mayeda

Doug Leffler

Model Shop

Supervisor:

Gene Rizzardi

Model Shop

Co-ordinator:

Laura Cram

Model Makers:

Glen Harrison

Olivia Rameriz

Carl Bostrom

Ana Ellis

Adam Hill

Zuzana Swansen

Gary Young

Bruce Macray

Omei Eaglerider

Mechanical Effects:

Dave Hettmer

Assistant Director:

Heather Ling

Optical Supervisor:

Spencer Gill

### EMC2 Systems

Preferred Video

Products

### Title Animation

Perpetual Motion

Pictures:

Visual FX Supervisor:

Richard Malzahn

Optical Supervisor:

Robert Habros

Animator:

Sallie McHenry

Ink & Paint:

Heather Davis

Judith Bell

Liz Lord

### Book of the Dead

Animation/Design

Tom Sullivan

### Editors

Bob Murawski

R.O.C. Sandstorm

Production Designer

Tony Tremblay

### Art Director

Aram Allan

### Set Decorator

Michele Poulik

### Set Dressers

Jonathan Bruce

Julie Hermelin

### Scenic Artists

John Snow

David Snow

Robert Campbell

Simon Addyman

Mark Donoghue

Thomas Bell

Ernest "Spike" Trevino

### Mechanical Effects

Supervisor:

Vern Hyde

Foreman:

Gary Jones

### Pyrotechnics

Gary Bentley

Dan Cangemi

### Music

Joseph LoDuca

'March of the Dead'

Theme:

Danny Elfman

### Orchestrations

Tim Simonec

Additional:

Larry Kenton

### Music Editor

Doug Lackey

### Costume Design

Ida Gearon

### Wardrobe Supervisor

Karyn Wagner

### Horse Dresser

Dena Matranga

### Make-up Artists

Supervisor:

Camille Calvet

Anne Hieronymus

### Special Make-up Effects

Kurtzman Nicotero

& Berger:

Supervisors:

Robert Kurtzman

Gregory Nicotero

Howard Berger

Mechanical

Department:

Mark Goldberg

Jeff Edwards

Wayne Toth

Mark Rappaport

Sculptors/Model

Makers:

Brent Armstrong

John Bisson

David Smith

Andy Clement

Paul Sciacca

Co-ordinator:

Susan Mallon

Foam Fabricator:

William Bryan

### Ash & Sheila

### Make-up Effects

Alterian Studios:

Project Supervisor:

Tony Gardner

Evil Ash Skeleton:

Bill Sturgeon

Evil Ash Sculpture and

Application:

Bruce Spaulding Fuller

Evil Sheila Sculpture:

Roger Borelli

Likeness Sculpture:

James McPherson

Prosthetic Make-up:

Garrett Immel

Mechanical Design:

David Penikas

Mark Goldberg

Hair Technicians:

Max Alvarez

Becky Ochoa

Fibreglass Fabrication:

John Calpin

Moulds:

Scary Gary Pawlowski

James Rohland

Foam Cosmetics:

Carolyn Oros

### Title Design

Jennifer Berkowitz

### Opticals

Huck Penzell

### Sound Design

Alan Howarth

### Dialogue Editors

Rick Freeman

Jim Brookshire

### ADR

Supervisor:

Craig Clark

Brian Risner

Miguel Rivera

Ken Burton

### Sound Recordists

Al Rizzo

Rich Gooch

Robert Jansen

ADR:

David Jobe

Foley:

Mark Harris

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Matthew Iadarola

Gary Gegan

ADR:

Bob Deschaine

Foley:

Linda Corbin

Music:

Dennis Sands

### Sound Effects

Lance Brown

Lewis Goldstein

Larry Goodwin

Jason King

Jack Levy

Paul Menichini

George Nemzer

### Foley Artists

Ellen Heuer

Joan Rowe

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Chris Doyle

### Stunts

Sandy Berumen

Richard Blackwell

Chuck Borden

Eddie Braun

George B. Colucci Jr

B.J. Davis

Yannick Derrien

Dick Hancock

Bill Hart

Donna Keegan

Maria Kelly Steven

Hal Lambert

Lane Leavitt

Gene Le Bell

Ken Lesco

Jack Lilley

Dennis Madalone

"Wild Bill" Mock

Tom Morgan

Bruce Morgan

Gary Morgan

Keith Morrison

John Nowak

Janet Lee Orcutt

Christian Page

John Sistrunk

Tim Trella

Christopher J. Tuck

Jack Verbois

Brian John Williams

### Swordplay Stunts

Master:

Dan Speaker

Swordfighters:

Dana Fredsti

Bridget Hoffman

Julianne Mazziotti

Vaughn Roberts

David C. Speaker

Geoffrey Donne

### Armourer

Brian Thomas

### Special Armour/

### Weapon Design



of the story so far, rewriting the events of previous films, with Bridget Fonda in a silent cameo as Ash's doomed girlfriend. Only called *Evil Dead III* in some foreign-language territories, this has a much-mutating title. Judging by the opening sequence, it actually appears to be called *Bruce Campbell vs Army of Darkness*, while the British release adds the subtitle *The Medieval Dead* for the publicity material.

The film now also features a revised all-action finish in place of a previewed, downbeat ending reminiscent of *Planet of the Apes*, in which the blundering Ash again fails at his spell and overshoots the centuries, arriving in a devastated post-nuclear landscape dominated by a derelict Big Ben. The current coda, like much which precedes it, is at once busy and unresonant, but it does contain the poignant notion of Ash walking away from a magical kingdom and the love of a princess to spend the rest of his life announcing special offers in a supermarket.

*Army of Darkness* is not so much a splatter rollercoaster on the model of the earlier instalments, more a fantasy adventure in the Ray Harryhausen tradition, as signified by the presence of a horde of animated sword-wielding skeletons. In fact, in its incredibly unconvincing British setting and sometimes ropery effects, it is even more reminiscent of such imitation-Harryhausen quickies as *Jack the Giant Killer* and *The Magic Sword*. As usual with Sam Raimi, there are multiple echoes of obscure or noteworthy genre items, with every borrowing overlaid by Three Stooges eye-poking slapstick. For instance, the creation of Evil Ash, who first appears as an eye in the hero's neck, is copied exactly from the 1961 Japanese film *The Split* (aka *The Manster*). As co-producer, Bruce Campbell hogs all the good lines, eclipsing the perfunctory supporting characters. This leaves the spectacular shocks strung out on an attenuated plot which reruns moments from *A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* along with fondly-remembered riffs (like Ash's cry "Groovy!") from the earlier *Evil Dead* movies.

Preoccupied with repetitive and clumsy battle scenes and mild, bloodless effects, *Army of Darkness* falls off the knife-edge between humour and horror walked by *The Evil Dead* and danced along by *Evil Dead II*. Without serious horror content, the film becomes a simple succession of gags, most notably in the extended and scrappy finale, which wastes such sure-fire melodramatic devices as Ash's Alamo-esque gathering of the staunch defenders, or the Duke Henry charging to the aid of his former foe. Even mediaeval swashbucklers as makeshift as Rudolph Maté's *The Black Shield of Falworth* used to summon up some enthusiasm for individual heroism and collective stands against evil; but Raimi's mocking tone and Ash's lack of character development prevent any actual audience involvement in this would-be epic struggle.

**Kim Newman**

## Bad Behaviour

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Les Blair

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

First Independent

### Production Company

Parallax Pictures

production for

Channel 4

In association with

British Screen

### Executive Producer

Sally Hibbin

### Producer

Sarah Curtis

### Production Co-ordinator

Shellie Smith

### Production Manager

Lesley Stewart

### Location Manager

Christian Banfield

### Casting

Gail Stevens

### Assistant Directors

Peter McAleese

Tommy Gormley

Ben Johnson

### Director of Photography

Witold Stok

In colour

### Camera Operators

Rodrigo Gutierrez

2nd Unit:

Paul Englefield

### Editor

Martin Walsh

### Production Designer

Jim Grant

### Art Director

Rebecca M. Harvey

### Music

John Altman

### Costume Design

Janty Yates

### Make-up

Louise Fisher

### Title Design

Chris Allies

### Sound Editors

David Old

Peter Elliott

### Foley Editor

Norman Cole

### Sound Recordists

Bruce White

2nd Unit:

Neil Kingsbury

### Cast

Stephen Rea

Gerry McAllister

Sinead Cusack

Ellie McAllister

Philip Jackson

Howard Spink

Clare Higgins

Jessica Kennedy

Phil Daniels

The Nunn Brothers

Mary Jo Randle

Winifred Turner

Saira Todd

Sophie Bevan

Amanda Boxer

Linda Marks

Luke Blair

Joe McAllister

Joe Coles

Michael McAllister

Tamlin Howard

Jake Spink

Emily Hill

Rosie Kennedy

Philippe Lewinson

Jason

Ian Flintoff

Chairperson

Kenneth Hadley

Priest

Siempre Caliente

Band

9,323 feet

104 minutes



From here to NW5: Sinead Cusack, Stephen Rea

self and not eating. Ellie tells Gerry she can't bear staying in London for ever: she would like to work full-time in the bookshop, but doesn't believe Gerry's flexitime is sufficient to reduce her domestic burdens. Howard instructs Roy Nunn to make a maintenance visit to a tenant, who proves to be Jess, as a front for valuing the property. Roy reminds Howard that his twin brother Ray is getting impatient about £1,200 Howard owes him.

The legalisation of the travellers' site is passed by the planning committee, and Gerry and his younger colleague Sophie celebrate at a tapas bar while Ellie and Winifred have a drunken heart-to-heart at home. Gerry and Sophie, also drunk, become increasingly close, Sophie inviting Gerry to a forthcoming salsa evening at the bar. Gerry returns home, where he underplays the planning success and says nothing of his night out. Ellie accuses him of driving Winifred away and goes to bed. One of the Nuns starts work early next morning, causing complaints about noise from the hungover Gerry. Rosie confides in Ellie about her deteriorating relationship with Jess. Ellie visits Jess, who complains about Rosie; Ellie suggests that Rosie could stay with her, and Jess leaps at the idea. The McAllisters are outraged to be billed by Howard for a 'consultancy fee', but when Gerry complains, Howard threatens legal action.

Jess brings Ellie a gift to thank her in advance for looking after Rosie but reveals that she hasn't mentioned the arrangement to Rosie. Ellie tells Jess she is driving Rosie away and suggests she needs professional help; Jess calls Ellie a selfish bitch. Meeting accidentally in a pub, Howard and Jess trade their supposed grudges against the McAllisters; Howard reveals that he's her landlord and drives her to her flat for afternoon sex, but they are interrupted by Rosie's arrival. Returning home, Howard is confronted by Gerry and the Nuns with their respective grievances, but announces that his house is about to be repossessed, and

the Spinks drive away, leaving the three men on the doorstep. At work, Sophie reminds Gerry about the salsa evening that night and is disappointed when he says he can't go. Jess is evicted, but Howard is evasive when she calls him for help. Ellie has changed her working hours and started writing. Child-minding while Ellie and Winifred go out to the same salsa evening as Sophie and her colleagues, Gerry finds a story of Ellie's and reads it. Ellie and Winifred return happy and drunk, and Gerry cycles out to retrieve the car, which Ellie has left near the tapas bar. In bed, he compliments her on her story; contented, they fall asleep.

With its downbeat London locations, focus on the upwardly mobile former working class and comically observant eye for clashing values and lifestyles, Les Blair's improvised domestic drama invites obvious comparisons with the films of Mike Leigh – whose *Bleak Moments* he edited and produced – particularly with Leigh alumni Rea, Daniels and Jackson among the cast. As with Leigh, the bulk of Blair's earlier improvised films – including the advertising industry satire *Honest Decent and True* and the 1990 BAFTA award-winner *Newshounds* – have been made for television, and *Bad Behaviour's* fly-on-the-wall naturalism doesn't make a concerted leap onto the big screen. While the office and domestic settings come refreshingly close to recreating the chaos of real life, the blurry documentary-style camerawork is relentlessly uncinematic. But stylistic reservations aside, Blair's application of *cinéma vérité* techniques to fictional material makes for a relaxed comedy with a richer, fuller view of human relations and 1990s urban life than we're likely to glean from Leigh's more grotesque creations.

The snippet-of-life narrative structure draws us into the thick of already-unfolding situations. Early scenes showing Howard discussing a dodgy piece of work with Roy, and tippexing out the copyright stamp on a ques- ▶



tionably acquired council plan, give us advance warning of the state of his scruples and his involvement with the long-suffering Nunn Brothers. A contrasting professional exchange between Gerry and Sophie depicts – with considerable wishful thinking about the sexual politics of planners – a working relationship marked by co-operative camaraderie rather than a sexualised hierarchy. ‘Overheard’ dialogue intensifies this sense of eavesdropping on real lives. When Rosie interrupts Jess in bed with Howard, the full measure of the situation – the mature, self-controlled daughter and the immature, out-of-control mother – is conveyed in a shot of Rosie’s face, while in the background Jess exclaims “Shit!” and Howard is heard making a post-coital phone call.

In its depiction of Howard and Jess’s ‘bad behaviour’, the film skates close to a condemnatory satire, in stark contrast to its sympathetic treatment of the dilemmas faced by the McAllisters: Howard’s mobile phone is particularly overused as a signifier of his dubious values. New Age enthusiasms are given equally short shrift, serving as a metaphor for Jess’s flakiness and inconsistency: when Rosie is blamed for preventing her mother from escaping to a Buddhist weekend, the real problem turns out to be that Jess hasn’t booked.

However, the minutiae Blair reveals in his characters’ lives more often undermine our expectations than reinforce them. Jackson’s Howard has affinities with the same actor’s memorably disgusting car salesman in Leigh’s *High Hopes*, but he reads Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism* in bed and boasts a North London therapy-belt wife who’s an expert on identical twins; in one of the film’s funniest scenes, an irritated Nunn Brother evades her professional probing. And Gerry is revealed to be an accomplished cartoonist, drawing himself as a character called Paddy Plan-It. Significantly, these details have almost no plot significance: in structure and pace, *Bad Behaviour* comes closer to the diffuse rhythms of daily life than the expected cinematic patterns of drama and resolution. Gerry stays home on the very night when his closeness to Sophie might have developed into an affair; Ellie’s discontents are eased by practical steps and Gerry’s support rather than erupting into a crisis.

The success of this study of good behaviour is due above all to the brilliantly credible screen partnership between Rea and Cusack, their relaxed intimacy and bantering humour suggesting a relationship as familiar and easy to underestimate as a favourite pair of socks. Rea’s genial, laid-back disillusioned idealist engages in food preparation and parenting without a trace of New Man smugness; and Cusack not only acquits herself marvelously in her first improvised work but shows infinitely better taste in her choice of roles than her husband Jeremy Irons did with another recent domestic drama, the wretched *Damage*.

Claire Monk

## Being at Home with Claude

Canada 1992

Director: Jean Beaudin

### Certificate

18

### Distributor

Out On a Limb

### Production Company

Les Productions

du Cerf

In association with

the National Film

Board of Canada

### Producer

Louise Gendron

### Associate Producer

NFB:

Doris Girard

### Designated Producer

NFB:

Léon G. Arcand

### Screenplay/Adaptation

Jean Beaudin

Based on the play

by René-Daniel Dubois

### Director of Photography

Thomas Vamos

In colour

Part in black and white

### Editor

André Corriveau

### Art Director

François Séguin

### Music

Richard Grégoire

### Costume Design

Louise Jobin

### Make-up

Louise Mignault

### Sound Editor

Marcel Pothier

### Sound Recordist

Michel Charron

### Cast

Roy Dupuis

Yves

Jacques Godin

Inspector

Jean-François Pichette

Claude

Gaston Lepage

Stenographer

Hugo Dubé

Policeman

Johanne-Marie Tremblay

Inspector's Wife

Nathalie Mallette

Yves' Sister

7,658 feet

85 minutes

### Subtitles

Montreal. On a hot summer’s night during the city’s jazz festival, two men, Claude and Yves, make passionate love. As he climaxes, Yves grabs a steak knife and cuts Claude’s throat. A couple of days later, Yves breaks into a judge’s chambers and calls the police to hear his confession. The inspector demands an explanation for the crime, but Yves is evasive at first. Gradually, the story unfolds: Claude, a sexually inexperienced intellectual from a wealthy background, timidly approached the young street hustler one night, but collapsed in an alcoholic stupor before the transaction was consummated, whereupon Yves returned his down payment. The pair fell in love, but the rebellious punk Yves soon became aware that he would never fit in with Claude’s milieu. He killed Claude for love.

Jean Beaudin’s film begins with a bang – a quick-fire black and white montage of downtown Montreal sleaze, its staccato rhythm scored with an ominous drum roll and smatterings of jazz, underlaid with the desperate pants and groans of frenzied intercourse as the camera homes in on Claude’s apartment: the window, the bathroom, the passageway, the kitchen, two men making love on the floor. The impact is sustained by extreme close-ups and slow motion as first a wineglass and then a steak knife fall to the ground with the thud of destiny. When it comes, the murder is

both the inevitable climax of this cinematic crescendo and a shocking release from it. The hustler runs off through the city to lose himself in the night. The titles roll. The movie is over and René-Daniel Dubois’ stage play begins.

It is a two-hander. The scene is the judge’s chambers (law books and stained glass window, the inner sanctum of the Establishment). Yves confronts the elderly, angry police inspector, who demands an explanation for the crime. The first act is busy and loud. So is the second. Mostly they feature the inspector hectoring and bullying the recalcitrant Yves while filling in background information for the audience’s benefit. The conflict is between old age and youth, innocence (ironically found in the older man) and experience (the streetwise punk), a guardian of society and an outsider. They reach an uneasy rapprochement via the boy’s cathartic, searing 25-minute monologue.

“Why don’t words work?” asks Yves, rhetorically. “They’re worn out – you can’t crank ‘em up.” Ironically, words are vitally important to Dubois’ play, which is full of them (though hindered here by the propensity of the sometimes lazy subtitles to stumble over slang). Beaudin, who credits himself with ‘cinematic adaptation’ as well as direction, expends a good deal of energy trying to crank up the words. Unusually for an interrogation film, the actors spend little time seated. They are constantly on the move, pacing and posturing, and the camera is equally restless. Flashbacks break the tyranny of the single set, while sound effects deliberately flout narrative expectations (the mention of a war movie cues a barrage of artillery). Such relentless technique betrays a lack of confidence in the material; this, one feels, is a film-maker all pumped up with nowhere to go. The play ends, after all, with a whimper.

Tom Charity



All pumped up: Roy Dupuis

## Braindead

New Zealand 1992

Director: Peter Jackson

### Certificate

18

### Distributor

Polygram

### Production Company

Wingnut Films

### Producer

Jim Booth

### Associate Producer

Jamie Selkirk

### Production Co-ordinator

Michelle Turner

### Production Manager

Nicola Olsen

### Unit Manager

Anna Cahill

### Location Manager

Anna Cahill

### Casting

Frances Walsh

### Assistant Directors

Chris Short

Witemara Rakete

### Screenplay

Stephen Sinclair

Frances Walsh

Peter Jackson

Based on an original

story idea by

Stephen Sinclair

### Director of Photography

Murray Milne

In colour

### Additional Photography

Steve Latty

### Camera Operator

Mark Olsen

### Steadicam Operators

Richard Bluck

Rick Alexander

### Stop Motion Animation

Peter Jackson

Richard Taylor

### Editor

Jamie Selkirk

### Production Designer

Kenneth Leonard-Jones

### Art Director

Ed Mulholland

### Set Dresser

Brad Mill

### Scenic Artist

Dave Cleary

### Storyboard Artist

Christian Rivers

### Special Effects

### Co-ordinator

Steve Ingram

### Creature and Gore Effects

Richard Taylor

### Models

Tich Rowney

Simon Jones

Peter Frahm

### Puppeteers

Supervisor:

Ramon Aguilar

Jeff Addison

Mandy Lowe

John Gifford

George Port

### Miniatures

Michael Eastwood

Glen Henderson

Anna Hill

Peter Jackson

Jarrad Linton

Paul Noble-Campbell

Grant Wallis

### Music

Peter Dasant

### Music Extracts

“Barwick Green

(Theme from

*The Archers*)”

by Arthur Wood;

“Maori Battalion” by

A. Amonau, performed

by the Maori Battalion

### Music Performed by

Peter Dasant

Guitars:

Fane Flaws

John O’Connor

Bass:

Jonathon Zwartz

Drums:

Jim Lawrie

### Backing Vocals:

Jane Lindsay

Lisa Spence

Kate Swadling

Tony Backhouse

### Music Producer

Peter Dasant

### Songs

“The Stars and Moon”

by Peter Dasant, Jane

Lindsay, performed

by Kate Swadling; “29

Steps” by Fane Flaws,

Stephen Hinderwell,

performed by Tony

Backhouse; “Heat of

My Thoughts” by and

performed by

Tony Backhouse

### Costume Design

Chris Elliott

### Make-up

Debra East

### Prosthetics Design

Bob McCarron

### Prosthetics/

Make-up Supervisor

Marjory Hamlin

### Titles

Sue Rogers

### Main Title Animation

Gnome Productions

### Sound Design

Mike Hedges

Sam Negri

### ADR

Barry Stewart

### Sound Recordists

Tony Johnson

Music:

Neil Maddever

### Sound Re-recordists

Mike Hedges

### Foley

Helen Luttrell

### Fight Choreographer

Damon DeBerry

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Peter Hassall

### Stunts

Damon DeBerry

Peter Hassall

Tony Wolf

Mark Taylor

### Cast

Timothy Balme

Lionel

Diana Penaver

Paquita

Elizabeth Moody

Mum

Ian Watkin

Uncle Les

Brenda Kendall

Nurse McTavish

Stuart Devenie

Father McGruder

Jed Brophy

Void

Elizabeth Brimicombe

Zombie Mum

Stephen Papps

Zombie McGruder

Murray Keane

Scroat

Glenis Levestam

Mrs Matheson

Lewis Rowe

Mr Matheson

Elizabeth Mullane

Rita

Harry Sinclair

Roger

Davina Whitehouse

Grandmother

Silvio Fumularo

Father

Brian Sergeant

Vet

Peter Vere-Jones

Undertaker

Tina Regtien

Mandy

Bill Ralston

Stewart

Tony Hopkins



Tony Hiles  
Zoo Keeper  
Duncan Smith  
Drunk  
Tich Rowney  
Barry  
George Port  
Lawrence  
Stephen Andrews  
Spike  
Nick Ward  
Spud  
Kenny McFadden  
Gladstone  
Angelo Robinson  
Courtney  
Johnny Chico  
Head Chief  
Fijian Rugby Club  
Tribesmen  
Peter Jackson  
Undertaker's Assistant  
James Grant  
Tram Driver  
Michelle Turner  
Blonde Woman  
Jim Booth  
Lionel's Father  
Sam Dailimore  
Young Lionel  
Anna Cahill  
Kate Jason-Smith  
Frances Walsh  
Mothers at Park  
Norman Willerton  
Tramp  
Robert Ericson  
Boy on Bike

Morgan Rowe  
Sean Hay  
Baby Selwyn  
Vicki Walker  
Selwyn Voice  
Chris Short  
Customs Official  
Jamie Selkirk  
Father at Zoo  
Brad Selkirk  
Son at Zoo  
Forrest J. Ackerman  
Forry  
Gim Bon  
Sarah Davis  
Anthony Donaldson  
Jo Edgecombe  
Mel Edgecombe  
Melody French  
Ken Hammon  
Michael Helms  
Mary O'Leary  
Simon Perkins  
Annie Prior  
Vanessa Redmond  
Chris Ryan  
Tim Saywell  
Paul Shannon  
Belinda Todd  
Featured Party  
Zombies

9,319 feet  
104 minutes

1957, Skull Island: a New Zealand zoologist loses both his arms and is then beheaded because the rare specimen of rat monkey he's carrying accidentally bites him. Wellington, New Zealand: Paquita, a young Spanish shopkeeper, is told by her tarot-reading granny that she is due to have a long romance with a man whom she will recognise by the symbol of the star and the moon. Her next customer, Lionel, knocks over a stand, causing liquorice to assume a crescent and star configuration; Paquita asks him out to the zoo. They are followed on their date by Lionel's widowed mother Vera, intent on sabotaging her son's romance. While hiding, she is bitten by a rat monkey, and becomes progressively more ill over the next few days. Despite being ministered to by Lionel and Paquita, whose dog she manages to eat, Vera is declared dead by district nurse McTavish, who is then decapitated by an undead Vera. Lionel manages to push his mother and Nurse McTavish - who also becomes re-animated - into the cellar.

Lionel visits Paquita at the shop and is given a mystic pendant for luck by her granny. He is followed by a fast-decomposing Vera, who is hit by a tram and assumed to have died from the accident. Although she returns to life again just before her funeral, Lionel tranquilises her long enough for a successful burial. Realising that she may still be undead, Lionel attempts to exhume her, only to be attacked by a gang of teddy boys. When one of them urinates on Vera's grave, he suffers a surprise castration at her hands. As the gang turn into zombies, the parish priest, Father McGruder, is awakened and helps Lionel fend them off, losing his own life in the process.

Lionel now has several undead in his cellar, where the carnally aroused McGruder and McTavish manage to conceive a zombie fetus. Vera's

brother Les discovers the sedated zombies and, thinking that Lionel is a necrophile, blackmails him into giving up Vera's estate, an event he celebrates by inviting friends to a party at Lionel's house. When a zombie is accidentally let out, Lionel and Paquita decide that the inhabitants of the cellar must be killed off permanently, but their plan backfires and all the guests end up zombified and hungry. Lionel discovers his father's remains in the attic and remembers that he witnessed Vera drowning him in the bath as a child. Freed from his guilt about her death, he successfully kills all the zombies with a lawnmower. He and Paquita are confronted by a gigantic, grotesquely decayed Vera, who manages to pull Lionel back into her womb. Just as she is about to kill Paquita, Lionel slices his way out with his lucky pendant. As Vera falls into the burning house, the reunited couple at last walk away free and unharmed.

In 1984, when the DPP drew up a list of video titles for prosecution under the Obscene Publications Act, at least 15 of the works in question were either zombie films or were heavily influenced by the genre. The list, of course, included Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*. Although he was never successfully prosecuted, the 'video nasty' publicity was enough to make Raimi shy away from the unsettling mood of the original in favour of comic set pieces for his sequels *Evil Dead II* and *Army of Darkness*. It is arguable that *Braindead* (which owes a heavy debt to Raimi) would have found itself on the DPP's hit list less than ten years ago. However, unfettered by any legal worries, it arrives in the UK just as Tom Savini's remake of the seminal *Night of the Living Dead* slinks off the big screen, having barely registered at the box office.

Biographical production notes allude to Peter Jackson's lifetime desire to make a zombie film, and *Braindead*,

his most coherent and technically accomplished film to date, certainly fulfils that ambition. But his film may just deliver a *coup de grâce* to a genre still reeling from the video nasty debate and the subsequent Video Recordings Act. With George Romero unable to find commercial or critical favour with his uncompromisingly bleak *Day of the Dead* (the only zombie film to extend the mythology of the monster in a halfway decent manner), the undead have repeatedly found themselves shuffling down the dirt track marked 'gross humour' (cf. Dan O'Bannon's *Return of the Living Dead*). With *Braindead*, they have reached a dead end, because it's impossible to imagine anyone out-grossing the New Zealander's effort, or wanting to. It seems that a serious treatment of the zombie as a monster for our times, encompassing what Thomas Pynchon called "the dreamer's own horror of isolation", is now well nigh impossible.

Witness how, despite a final half-hour of delirious mayhem, in which lawnmowers, meat cleavers, garden shears and chef mixers unite to purée an army of zombie extras, *Braindead* has been passed uncut, while Romero's sequels and Raimi's *The Evil Dead* all suffered punishing trims at the hands of the censor. This is not to discredit the BBFC, which has recognised the film's EC Comics credentials, and thus dismissed its potential as a tabloid pot-stirrer. In doing so, however, they have unwittingly aligned themselves with those who know and perhaps love the zombie (as appears to be true of audiences at several festivals worldwide, where *Braindead* has been enthusiastically received), rather than those who do not. Members of the latter group, stumbling into *Braindead* unprimed by at least one Romero/Raimi work, or by O'Bannon's jokey film, will find plenty to reinforce recent concern and bewilderment about screen violence.

Their reaction will be heightened by

the fact that Jackson and his co-writers Walsh and Sinclair take an adolescent zit-squeezers' delight in pushing the audience head first into their bloody, muciferous, eviscerated images. While some of the orifice-puncturing, head-splitting prosthetics fail to come up to scratch, other efforts - like a dinner guest unknowingly gulping down custard laced with a newly burst boil - have a genuine emetic quality.

It's a measure of Jackson's audacity that he juxtaposes moments like this with footage of Elizabeth Windsor (with 'God Save the Queen' on the soundtrack) without breaking his stride. Among all the carnage is a sly dig at New Zealand's Commonwealth heritage (underlining the Antipodes' current republican mood) and the need to maintain a stiff upper lip as others are literally losing theirs. The film knowingly breaks into the *Archers* theme tune, just as Vera and a semi-decapitated Nurse McTavish are hurriedly pushed into the cellar to save appearances. Lionel's despair as he acquires an extended underground family resolutely intent on flouting decorum is made funnier by the fact that he is more embarrassed than horrified by his predicament. Unfortunately Jackson cannot maintain this level of wit and relies heavily on set pieces, including a rather ham-fisted nod to Larry Cohen's *It's Alive* (Lionel taking the zombie baby to the park) and a more successful martial arts piss-take, which sees Father McGruder fly-kicking the undead teds with the fervour of a born-again Bruce Lee.

But the film's finest moment is the climactic variation of an old Freudian chestnut: Vera, reincarnated as a gigantic, hyper-oestrogenised distortion of motherhood, opens up her pudendum to accommodate her son's re-entry, providing a memorable Oedipal (w)retch for our times, and a highly unsuitable epitaph for the zombie monster.

Farrah Anwar



They came from Down Under: Ian Watkin



# Close to Eden

USA 1992

Director: Sidney Lumet

## Certificate

15

## Distributor

Rank

## Production Company

Propaganda Films

In association with

Sandollar/Isis

## Executive Producers

Sandy Gallin

Carol Baum

## Producers

Steve Golin

Sigurjon Sighvatsson

Howard Rosenman

## Co-producers

Susan Tarr

Robert J. Avrech

## Line Producer

Burt Harris

## Associate Producer

Lilith Jacobs

## Production Co-ordinator

Wendi Haas

## Production Manager

John H. Starke

## Location Manager

Brett Botula

## Casting

Joy Todd

## Assistant Directors

Burt Harris

John Penotti

## Screenplay

Robert J. Avrech

## Director of Photography

Andrzej Bartkowiak

## In colour

## Camera Operator

Cary Fisher

## Video Playback

Joe Trammell

## Editor

Andrew Mondshein

## Production Designer

Philip Rosenberg

## Art Director

Steve Graham

## Set Decorator

Gary Brink

## Set Dresser

Bruce Swanson

## Scenic Artist

Dick Ventre

## Special Effects

## Co-ordinator

Gregory C. Tippie

## Special Effects

James S. Rollins

Leo Solis

Daniel Ottesen

John Ottesen

Ronald Ottesen

## Music

Jerry Bock

## Orchestrations

Jack Elliot

## Songs

"Change Partners" by

Irving Berlin; "Egypto

Tech" by Roger Deller,

Joe Misiti, performed by

The Turn-Ups; "Mi

Bon Siach" by Paul Zim

## Choreography

Eleanor Reissa

## Costume Design

Gary Jones

Ann Roth

## Wardrobe Supervisors

Melissa Stanton

Tim Alberts

## Make-up Design

Carl Fullerton

## Make-up Artists

Alan Weisinger

Naomi Donne

## Titles/Opticals

The Optical House

## Supervising Sound Editor

Maurice Schell

## Sound Editors

Richard Cirincione

Neil Kaufman

## ADR Editor

Jane McCulley

## Sound Recordists

Chris Newman

## Music

Ed Rack

Dolby stereo

## Sound Re-recorder

Tom Fleischman

## Yiddish/Religious Adviser

Rabbi Philip H. Singer

## Stunt Co-ordinator

Jack Gill

## Stunts

Spike Silver

Danny Aiello III

Jerry Hewitt

Don Hewitt

Norman Douglass

Andy Gill

Janet Paparazzo

Deborah Watkins

John Cenatiempo

Phil Nielson

Tony Cucci

Nick Giangiulio

Bill Anagnos

Roy Farfel

Joel Kramer

Paul Bucossi

Eddie Bonser

Manny Silver

## Cast

Melanie Griffith

Emily Eden

Eric Thal

Ariel

John Pankow

Levine

Tracy Pollan

Mara

Lee Richardson

Rebbe

Mia Sara

Leah

Jamey Sheridan

Nick

Jake Weber

Yaakov

Ro'ee Levi

Mendel

David Rosenbaum

Mr Klausman

Ruth Vool

Mrs Klausman

David Margulies

Lieutenant Oliver

Ed Rogers III

Detective Tedford

Maurice Schell

Detective Marden

James Gandolfini

Tony Baldessari

Chris Collins

Chris Baldessari

Burt Harris

Emily's Father

Ira Rubin

French Rebbe

Françoise Granville

French Rebbitzin

Rena Sofer

Shayna

Shifra Lerer

Eleanor Reissa

Yiddish Women

James Lovelett

File Room Clerk

Jack Gill

Zap Goon

Steve Hamilton

Paramedic

Paul Zim

Cantor

Drew Eliot

Inspector

Alexander Pasmur Jnr

Klausman Son

John Louis Fischer

Yussel

Jack Beers

Rebbe's Assistant

9,836 feet

109 minutes

Emily Eden, a New York detective, is passionately involved with her cop partner Nick. When he is stabbed during an arrest, she shoots his assailant and stays with Nick as an ambulance rushes him to hospital. Investigated by her superiors for use of excessive force, she is vindicated and assigned to a new case. A young Hasidic Jew, Yaakov Klausman, has disappeared along with \$720,000 worth of diamonds. In order to investigate, Emily must have the authority of the Hasidic community's spiritual leader, the Rebbe, through whom she is able to talk with Yaakov's parents and visit the jewellery business where he worked. Finding Yaakov's corpse hidden in his office, she reasons that he must have been murdered by someone he knew, and suggests that she trace the killer by becoming a member of the community. The Rebbe assigns his daughter Leah and son Ariel to look after Emily and guide her in Hasidic ways.

Proud of her new brunette image, she visits Nick in hospital, reassuring him that their relationship is secure. At the precinct HQ, she is assigned a new partner, Levine, who makes no secret of his lecherous intentions. The more she learns about the Hasidim, the more she respects their restrained and harmonious existence, particularly as exemplified by Ariel, who is to be the next Rebbe. Working at the jewellery store, she witnesses an attempt by two thugs, the Baldessari brothers, to extort protection money; later, Mara, Yaakov's former fiancée, is found attacked. The Hasidim hold a party at which Ariel's engagement - to a French girl he has never met - is announced; disconsolate at the news, Emily discusses Ariel's plans with him when they are alone together. He explains that the engagement is his destiny. At the store, Emily arrests the Baldessarins; shot while trying to escape, they die protesting ignorance of Yaakov's murder.

Nearly recovered, Nick proposes to Emily but she turns him down. That night, Ariel visits her and begs her not to complicate his life by seducing him from his code. Discussing Yaakov, they realise that the evidence points to Mara, who has announced her intention to leave the city. Rushing to the synagogue, they find that Leah is being held hostage by an armed Mara. Emily is knocked out, and Ariel is forced, against his instincts, to shoot Mara to save Leah. After a tearful farewell at Emily's hospital bedside, Ariel turns to his forgiving fiancée, newly arrived from Paris. A guest at their wedding, Emily slips away and runs into Levine outside the precinct HQ. He propositions her but she refuses. She is waiting for her destiny, she says, and goes in to collect her next assignment.

Suspicions that all is not quite right with *Close to Eden* become certainty when the identity of the killer is at last revealed. Although Mara is as much of a fake convert to the Hasidic regime as Emily, she appears immune to its attractions; rescued, as

she describes it, from the depths of degradation by a serene Hasidic hand, she has used the opportunity (so we must deduce) to plan the destruction of her saviour in the course of a jewel heist. Emily, on the other hand, similarly street-wise in background and accustomed to tackling degradation every day of the week, responds to the Hasidim as to an undiscovered country where family values, fair play and gentlemanly courtesy are not yet extinct. It might be argued that in challenging this code Emily is innocently as subversive as Mara, eventually driving her host to commit the ultimate sin, another killing. Nevertheless, she does finally appear to have acquired a fresh - if disconcertingly fatalistic - set of values from her experience, while Mara has apparently died unrepentant.

This interesting contradiction between the effects that the Hasidim are presumed to have on outsiders is denied its full force thanks to the demands of the whodunnit. Until Mara is unmasked, we have no reason to suppose that she is one of the community's failures; then, amid the hasty gunplay, it is too late to examine her grievances in detail. Although industriously played by Tracy Pollan, who gives Mara a look of bright-eyed instability from first encounter, her fathomless character does little to explain the crime itself. Clearly, she could systematically have robbed the jewellery store for a considerable period without having to kill anybody, let alone her harmlessly earnest fiancé. And since she is aware at an early stage that Emily is an undercover cop, the justification for Emily's entire (and singularly unconvincing) masquerade is exposed as little more than a tenuous plot device. Moreover, it must have taken superhuman strength, along with irrational reasoning, for Mara to haul Yaakov's corpse into the office ceiling space so that it could drip blood revealingly on the tiles below.

Fulcrum between the extremes, the Rebbe's daughter Leah, sweetly played by Mia Sara, explains the Hasidic cause from detail (concealed knees, distinct refrigerators, segregated buses) to principle ("When we were a desert tribe...") while shaping her own future with methodical care. If the Rebbe is weighed down with wisdom and his

son Ariel is veering uncomfortably between worldliness and sanctity, Leah enhances Hasidism with tact and determination, gently guiding a suitable partner in her own direction and changing her shawls by the end of the story from a naive green to a triumphant red. Sadly, she is the only subtlety of *Close to Eden*, its clumsily two-edged title (the original, *A Stranger Among Us*, was far more appealing) signalling further confusion as Eden meets Ariel, the Rebbe acquires intimations of Prospero, and Calibans abound. Lumet uncharacteristically allows his monsters an excess of snarl - the Baldessari brothers are straight out of Hale and Pace, the police precinct is a hive of lurid chauvinism, Levine is a preposterous hustler - while unwisely cloaking all the Hasidic scenes in unvarying hues of dark and cloying orange as if, in its preservation of ancient mores, the sect would have no defence against the light of day.

As few directors can match Lumet in timing, editing and the canny use of faces, there is reassuringly much to enjoy in his telling of this implausible hybrid of *Witness* and *Homicide* - slight as it is by contrast with the magnificent deceptions of *Q&A* or *The Verdict*. The opening burst of action, which hustles us into an ambulance with barely time to breathe, is a sequence to savour, while the scenes of Emily and her wounded partner Nick are simply and neatly understated. But when Emily and Ariel are squaring up to each other, Lumet's skill with the glance, the pause and the body language of his players is cruelly undermined by the dialogue. And there are times when his choice of Melanie Griffith as rugged cop with undecided heart and quavering little-girl voice seems disastrous. "You people," she gasps at one point, "you really care for each other." Precariously perched on a set seemingly reconstructed from *West Side Story* (an unusual choice for seasoned New Yorker Lumet) the troubled Ariel - given a stoical dignity by newcomer lyric Thal - finds at least one good answer to such roguish broadsides, when Emily suggests, "Guess you're not used to a woman like me, huh?" Stirred but unshaken, he ponders, "Is anybody?"

Philip Strick



Nobody calls me shiksa: Melanie Griffith







Andre Odendaal	Stephanus Titus
Corporal Botes	Barman
Russell Copely	Philip Notununu
Corporal Dutoit	Man in Bar
Terri Norton	Andre Jacques Van Der Merwe
Saartjie Haarhoff	Tourist Husband
Lourens Swanepoel	Marietjie Vaughn
Hendryk Wapenaar	Tourist Wife
Luke Cornell	Ursula Peveling
Philip Henn	Tourist Daughter
Soldiers	Erle Vaughan
Robert Stevenson	Tourist Son
Rifle Boy	Jaco Espach
Peter Haller	Truck Driver
Monk	Madonna
Stephen Earnhart	Ben's Dog
Camper Driver	
Isaac Mavimbela	
Farmhand	9,270 feet
Crystal Dobson	103 minutes
Mrs Letman	
Mickey Wenk	
Checkpoint Soldier	

● Namibia, 1989. Hitch, human avatar of an African wind demon, murders a neglected wife and ritually dissects her corpse. Ben Moko-rub, a black policeman, is given the case and learns from a pathologist that the murder is probably connected with ritual magic. Wendy Robinson, a dissatisfied South African housewife, leaves her husband Mark and takes off into the desert, encountering Hitch on the road. Hitch has committed another murder, and Ben discovers that similar killings have been occurring since the turn of the century.

Consulting tribal magician and drive-in projectionist Joe Niemand, Ben learns that the killer only chooses those who want to die and that he murders in order to return to an other-world from which he has been excluded. Wendy considers but rejects suicide and continues to travel with Hitch, with whom she has an affair, while Mark follows her trail to Bethany, a border community on the point of expiring, and is beaten up by a black mechanic who has been battered by Ben's white subordinates.

When Namibia, newly independent of South Africa, comes under UN authority, Ben loses his official power but resolves to continue with the case to expiate his own feelings of guilt at the death long ago of his son and subsequent abandonment by his wife. Discovering severed fingers in Hitch's pack, Wendy flees, pursued by the shape-changing killer. Ben links up with Mark and they follow Hitch and Wendy into the desert. After their jeep turns over, Ben handcuffs Mark to the vehicle and proceeds alone, confronting Hitch outside an abandoned cinema where the killer grants his death wish by gutting him. Wendy blows off Hitch's head with a pump shotgun, but herself becomes an incarnation of the dust devil and walks away from Mark, hitching a ride with a convoy of UN tanks.

● A more personal film than Richard Stanley's debut feature, the efficient low-budget s-f suspenser *Hardware*, this mystical slasher movie presents a shape-shifting serial killer who is at once the incarnation of an ancient African spirit and a style-conscious retread of Clint Eastwood's *Man With No Name*. Emerging from a shim-



Desert song: Chelsea Field

mering landscape, the dust devil is kitted out with visual and aural accoutrements (slicker, hat, knife; laconic dialogue, a jangling that sounds like spurs, reinvented Morricone by Simon Boswell) that tag him as a hero rather than a monster. Obviously sensing his Western overtones, Wendy nicknames him 'Tex', although his preferred alias of 'Hitch' suggests other generic allegiances, to the Sainted Alfred and to Rutger Hauer in *The Hitcher*. Neutrally polite with his willing victims, Hitch is appealingly desperate in his attempts to jam through a bathroom mirror to return to the limbo from which he is exiled - a shot from the other side of the mirror is an effective echo of the depths of *The Keep* and the shallows of *House* - but his alienness is underlined by the many aspects of his ritual killing spree, from the severed fingers in his travelling cooler to his habit of jamming clock parts into the corpses of the sacrifices, which go unexplained.

The film's horror credentials are established with a few striking supernaturally-flavoured action scenes (Wendy chased into the desert, causing a car crash which Hitch turns into a conflagration) and odd monster imagery (*Howling*-style claws bursting through the fingers of the surgeon's gloves). The climax pays off with an impressive and expressive exploding head and an evil-lives-on ending whose very familiarity adds to the feel of a much-repeated ritual as the cycle begins anew. For all its lean boogey man strengths, this is mainly a hallucinatory picture: Stanley delivers the requisite shocks with a buff's care and enthusiasm, but is obviously more interested in eerie desert images, like a valley reportedly created by the slithering of a giant snake at the dawn of time, and other unsettling touches: an abandoned cinema half-buried under drifting sands, or the melancholy monster's almost-delicate dance with Field

to Hank Williams' 'Rambling Man'.

Based on an actual murder case (subject also of David Wicht's 1989 racial conspiracy movie *Windprints*), this tackles incipient political themes in its precise evocation of the Namibian border in 1989, but is more concerned with thanatophilic romance and an evocation of ancient magic. In this, Stanley's preferred cut, the role of projectionist-magician Joe Niemand as voice-over commentator is strengthened, his evocative mix of professions signalled by the way the narration is as respectful of a double bill of *Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* and *The Bird With the Crystal Plumage* as of ancient symbolist beliefs or the truth found in dreams. Similarly, scraps of country and western songs or the abandoned cinema are invested with a mythic pop culture resonance that is given equal weight with the primal beauties and terrors of landscape and natural sound (in his car, Ben listens to whale songs).

The version released in the UK - the film has had a week's token cinema release before going to video - differs from the US cut sanctioned by Miramax by about 20 minutes, consisting mainly of evocative snippets of scenery or wild life. Also beefed up is William Hootkins' role as a surprisingly sympathetic white South African cop: a vital scene, deleted in the shorter cut, explains why Ben is robbed of his official status with Namibia's independence, turning his search for the dust devil from a Hawksian professional obligation into a personal quest à la Anthony Mann. More time is given to Ben's slightly too explanatory dreams, and concomitantly one or two sequences effective in the US version have been regrettably abridged: the dance, for instance, and several other contemplative moments keyed in with an evocative use of music. However, in any of its several editions, this is a considerable and remarkable film.

Kim Newman

## Falling Down

USA 1992

Director: Joel Schumacher

<b>Certificate</b> 18	<b>Costume Design</b> Marlene Stewart
<b>Distributor</b> Warner Bros	<b>Wardrobe Supervisor</b> Silvio Scarano
<b>Production Company</b> Warner Bros	<b>Make-up Artists</b> Tom Lucas
<b>Executive Producer</b> Arnon Milchan	<b>Steve Abrams</b>
<b>Producers</b> Arnold Kopelson Herschel Weingrod Timothy Harris	<b>Title Design</b> BLT & Associates
<b>Co-producers</b> Dan Kolsrud Stephen Brown Nana Greenwald	<b>Titles/Opticals</b> Pacific Title
<b>Associate Producers</b> William S. Beasley Ebbe Roe Smith John J. Tomko	<b>Supervising Sound Editors</b> Charles L. Campbell Louis L. Edemann
<b>Production Associate</b> Christine A. Johnston	<b>Sound Editors</b> Rick Franklin Nils Jensen Chuck Neely Doug Jackson
<b>Unit Production Manager</b> William S. Beasley	<b>Supervising ADR Editor</b> Larry Singer
<b>Location Managers</b> Antoinette Levine Paul Brinkman Jr	<b>ADR Editor</b> Andrea Horta
<b>Casting</b> Marion Dougherty	<b>Sound Recordists</b> David Macmillan
<b>Assistant Directors</b> Stephen Dunn Dennis Capps David Fudge	<b>Music:</b> Shawn Murphy Dolby stereo
<b>Screenplay</b> Ebbe Roe Smith	<b>Sound Re-recordists</b> Wayne Artman Tom Dahl
<b>Director of Photography</b> Andrzej Bartkowiak	<b>Robert Schaper</b>
<b>Colour</b> Technicolor	<b>Foley Artists</b> John Roesch Alicia Stevenson
<b>Special Photography</b> Jane Bovingdon	<b>Technical Adviser</b> Lieutenant M.D. "Doc" Warkentin
<b>Camera Operators</b> Michael Gershman James Muro	<b>Stunt Co-ordinator</b> Michael Runyard
<b>Steadicam Operator</b> James Muro	<b>Stunts</b> Greg Barnet Bob Bass
<b>Editor</b> Paul Hirsch	<b>Steve Boyum</b>
<b>Production Designer</b> Barbara Ling	<b>Gary Combs</b>
<b>Art Director</b> Larry Fulton	<b>Steve Davison</b>
<b>Set Design</b> Jann K. Engel Brad Ricker	<b>Mike Deluna</b>
<b>Set Decorator</b> Cricket Rowland	<b>Scott Dockstader</b>
<b>Production Illustrator</b> Tim Flattery	<b>Maria Doest</b>
<b>Special Effects</b> Co-ordinator Matt Sweeney	<b>Danny Eppers</b>
<b>Special Effects</b> Bob Stoker	<b>Richie Gaono</b>
<b>Jim Schwalm</b>	<b>Armando Guerrero</b>
<b>Lucinda Strub</b>	<b>Norman Howell</b>
<b>Music</b> James Newton Howard	<b>Tommy Huff</b>
<b>Orchestrations</b> James Newton Howard	<b>Jeff Imada</b>
<b>Brad Dechter</b>	<b>Henry Kingi</b>
<b>Chris Boardman</b>	<b>Steve Lambert</b>
<b>Music Editor</b> Jim Weidman	<b>Gary McClarty</b>
<b>Songs</b> "The Stripper" by David Rose, performed by David Rose and his Orchestra; "La Schmoove" by R. Roachford, J. Jones, L. Maturine, M. Taylor, A. Muhammad, performed by Fu Schnickens; "Murio Nuestro Amor de Verano (Sin For Que)" by and performed by Luisa Maria Guelli; "Estupida De Mi" by Angel Anibal Rosado, performed by Arabella; "Happy Birthday To You" by Patty S. Hill, Mildred J. Hill; "I Didn't Slip, I Wasn't Pushed, I Fell" by Eddie Pola, George Wyle	<b>Eric Mansker</b>
	<b>Johnny Meier</b>
	<b>Manny Perry</b>
	<b>Ronnie Rondell</b>
	<b>Gilbert Rosales</b>
	<b>Tommy Rosales</b>
	<b>Michael Runyard</b>
	<b>Dick Ziker</b>
	<b>Cast</b>
	<b>Michael Douglas</b>
	<b>D-Fens</b>
	<b>Robert Duvall</b>
	<b>Prendergast</b>
	<b>Barbara Hershey</b>
	<b>Beth</b>
	<b>Rachel Ticotin</b>
	<b>Sandra</b>
	<b>Tuesday Weld</b>
	<b>Mrs Prendergast</b>
	<b>Frederic Forrest</b>
	<b>Surplus Store Owner</b>
	<b>Lois Smith</b>
	<b>D-Fens' Mother</b>
	<b>Joey Hope Singer</b>
	<b>Adele (Beth's Child)</b>
	<b>Ebbe Roe Smith</b>
	<b>Guy on Freeway</b>
	<b>Michael Paul Chan</b>
	<b>Mr Lee</b>
	<b>Raymond J. Barry</b>
	<b>Captain Yardley</b>
	<b>D.W. Moffett</b>
	<b>Detective Lydecker</b>
	<b>Steve Park</b>
	<b>Detective Brian</b>
	<b>Kimberly Scott</b>
	<b>Detective Jones</b>
	<b>James Keane</b>
	<b>Detective Keene</b>



<b>Macon McCalman</b> Detective Graham	<b>Mark Frank</b> Annoying Man at Phone Booth
<b>Richard Montoya</b> Detective Sanchez	<b>Peter Radon</b> Spencer Rochfort
<b>Bruce Beatty</b> Police Clerk	<b>Gay Men</b>
<b>Matthew Saks</b> Officer at Station	<b>Carole Ita White</b> Second Officer at Beth's
<b>Agustin Rodriguez</b> Eddie Frias	<b>Russell Curry</b> Second Officer's Partner
<b>Pat Romano</b> Fabio Urena	<b>John Fink</b> Guy Behind Woman Driver
<b>Karina Arroyave</b> Angie	<b>Jack Kehoe</b> Street Worker
<b>Irene Olga Lopez</b> Angie's Mother	<b>Valentino D. Harrison</b> Kid with Missile Launcher
<b>Benjamin Moston</b> Uniformed Officer at Beth's	<b>Jack Betts</b> Frank (Golfer)
<b>Dean Hall</b> Uniformed Officer's Partner	<b>Al Mancini</b> Jim (Golfer)
<b>James Morrison</b> Construction Sign Man by Bus Stop	<b>John Diehl</b> Dad (Back Yard Party)
<b>John Fleck</b> Seedy Guy in Park	<b>Amy Morton</b> Mom (Back Yard Party)
<b>Brent Hinkley</b> Rick (Whammyburger)	<b>Abbey Barthel</b> Trina (Back Yard Party)
<b>Dee Dee Pfeiffer</b> Sheila (Whammyburger)	<b>Susie Singer</b> Suzie the Stripper
<b>Carol Androsky</b> Woman Who Throws Up (Whammyburger)	<b>Wayne Duvall</b> Paramedic
<b>Margaret Medina</b> Lita the Waitress	<b>Valisha Jean Malin</b> Prendergast's Daughter
<b>Vondie Curtis-Hall</b> Not Economically Viable Man	<b>10,115 feet</b> <b>112 minutes</b>

On a June morning in Los Angeles, two men are caught in the same traffic jam. One abandons his car and walks away; the other announces himself as a cop, Detective Martin Prendergast, working off his last day of duty. He orders the car to be shoved to the side of the road, revealing license plates which read 'D-FENS'. Its driver walks into a nearby grocery, ostensibly asking for change to use a pay phone. When the Korean owner, Mr Lee, tells him he must make a purchase, he uses Lee's baseball bat to trash the shelves before exchanging his dollar bill for two quarters and a Classic Coke.

At work, Prendergast is taunted by his colleagues, who regard him as a desk jockey. The exception is his ex-partner Sandra Torres, who asks Prendergast to meet her for lunch. Meanwhile, in a Venice Beach bungalow, Beth, the divorced wife of 'D-Fens', is organising a birthday party for her daughter Adele. D-Fens is trying to reach her on the phone, but keeps finding it engaged. Sitting down to drink his Coke, he is interrupted by two Latino gang members, who try to commandeer his briefcase. He fends them off, relieving one of a switchblade. Downtown, Prendergast gets the first of a series of complaints from his nervous wife, followed by a call from Mr Lee, who tells him about the "man in the white shirt and tie." The gang members, looking for revenge, spot D-Fens and spray the entire street with gunfire, but fail to injure him. As their car piles into another, D-Fens commandeers their weapons. As reports hit police HQ, Prendergast is receiving a cursory last-day speech from his contemptuous captain. Beth, panicked by her ex-husband's call, asks for police protection.

After being panhandled by a con-man, D-Fens carries his growing arsenal into a local Whammyburger,

where, told it is minutes too late to buy breakfast, he terrorises staff and customers. Prendergast is watching his colleagues quiz the gang members' girlfriend Angelina, who tells them about the "man with a white shirt and tie"; later, he is having lunch with Sandra when she is called out to the Whammyburger. Torres tracks the culprit to a surplus store, where the owner covers for him. The owner then reveals himself to be a homophobe and neo-Nazi with his own weapons; menaced by him, D-Fens kills him and exits dressed in combat gear.

Convinced that one man is behind the same crimes, Prendergast and Torres team up to find him. Prendergast remembers the man with the D-FENS licence plates; finding his name is William Foster, he and Torres call at his home, where they find his frightened mother. Crossing a private golf course, Foster scares an old man into a heart attack. Torres discovers Foster has been unemployed since being fired by a defence plant a month earlier. She and Prendergast trace Beth's residence. Foster has now reached Beverly Hills, where he terrifies the caretaker and his family at a plastic surgeon's mansion. Unable to get police protection, Beth races out with Adele, moments before Foster arrives. Foster suspects they have fled to Venice Pier, but before he can leave, is ambushed by Torres and Prendergast. Torres is wounded while Foster escapes, but armed with her gun, Prendergast tracks him to the pier, tricks him into setting his gun down and holds him at bay. Bluffing with Adele's water pistol, Foster forces a fatal shoot-out and topples into the bay. Prendergast returns the family to their bungalow, where the guests are beginning to assemble for Adele's party. Then he has the small pleasure of telling his Captain "fuck you" in front of news cameras.

*Falling Down* has been heavily hyped as a controversial blockbuster - a "crude vigilante picture" stalking the mall disguised as satire; "the Michael Douglas film which goes beyond *Basic Instinct*"; an orgy of violent wish-fulfilment aimed at America's white middle class (who, in Clintonian budget terms, earn circa \$100,000 per year and do not constitute the mass of multiplex escapists). *Newsweek* used a shot of Douglas as D-Fens on its cover, for a story entitled 'White Male Paranoia', and last month's *Sight and Sound* deconstructed the film over three pages.

Of course, Douglas and director Joel Schumacher seize any credit for handling issues of moment. They clearly wanted to make a *Taxi Driver* for the 90s, to update the toll of urban stress on the 'working man's' psyche. To this end, *Falling Down* is paced and shot idiosyncratically, cleverly scripted and structured (details about its characters unreel very gradually) and wonderfully lit by Andrej Bartkowiak. Yet its driving force is the same old shameless Hollywood formula: horror pic meets action pic meets urban-anxiety

thriller. Added to this is a level of product placement (masquerading as irony) which would shame even Nike.

The film means to be different by not letting any one of its genre elements dominate. Instead, that domination is distilled into Michael Douglas. He plays a stylised character, half surreal, half real bad guy: a sociopath called Billy Foster, laid off by an LA defence firm, Notech. Critics have painted Foster as a kind of crash-and-burn finale for the USA's White Hero. But he's hardly the first Anglo-American male in movies to walk away from problems, bully people without regard to race, creed or colour, and project a warped sense of affection onto his own daughter. He's simply the first one to be played by showbiz dynast Douglas. And, however hard Douglas works, he brings an overkill of aura to the very idea of what it means to be 'working class'.

Not that he gets any help from his character. D-Fens is a composite of the media's nightmare projections, a Frankenstein who is part *Oprah*, part network news and part 'reality programming' (US TV such as *Cops*, *Hard Copy* and *Unsolved Mysteries*). He's not passed off as surd evil, yet his outlines remain fuzzy. Why was he fired from the job? Where has he been going every day? How come a 'working stiff' talks like a Beverly Hills *bon viveur*? Foster is supposed to crack under the burden of outsize resentments and deep confusion. But all we get is Michael Douglas, weighed down by those Big Themes he thinks his character carries. Douglas transforms every outburst into a comic punchline, and so much wants to be 'understood' that he practically winks at the audience. But he understands the 'working class' less than they understand Hollywood.

This is why Robert Duvall walks away with the film, turning it into a fairly absorbing drama about a cop who has more secrets than his sociopath. While Douglas cruises along on single-gear star charisma, Duvall slowly unveils a complex and real working-class hero, raunchy and fallible, worn and gutsy. Prendergast was written as the converse of his quarry: a cop whose final day at work collides with Foster's last shred of san-

ity. Foster terrorises his wife (Barbara Hershey, excellent at suggesting the messy links between desire and violence) and Prendergast coddles his (Tuesday Weld, excellent too as a woman defeated first by the loss of her child, then the loss of her beauty). A traffic delay explodes Foster; but, trapped in the very same gridlock, Prendergast chuckles over a billboard at the side of the road. Foster cannot see people - to him, they are merely obstacles. But Prendergast is revealed as tolerant and ultra-observant; he is an exceptional cop, an experienced psychological handler. Prendergast is a man not because he carries a gun and blows away disrespect; he is manly because he doesn't need anyone else to acknowledge his fortitude. Duvall shows us a well of solitude far scarier, but far truer, than any of the film's overblown urban spectres (drive-by shooters out of Peckinpah, panhandlers who sound like prime-time comedians, a sexist Nazi homophobe with a David Koresh-size arsenal).

Prendergast accepts that life is tough and luck is random; he's the only character who calls Foster what he is - an "ordinary" whiner. Cornered on Venice Pier, Douglas gestures limply over the waters, mumbling that plastic surgeons have stolen the American dream. Playing on the irony of *Michael Douglas* saying this, Prendergast almost shakes the screen with his incredulous laughter. "You're mad because they lied to you? They lie to everybody! They lie to the FISH!"

A whole life has gone against Duvall's character. Yet somehow Prendergast gets the most out of everything - whether it's solving his final crime or anticipating a Mexican meal. Humour has proved his saving grace: Prendergast laughs to explode pain, to cope with contempt from his captain and colleagues, to expiate the terrible range of human acts cops must witness. It's fascinating to find that such laughter packs more visceral power than either D-Fens' weaponry or Douglas' star presence. Along with Hershey, Weld and Rachel Ticotin (as Prendergast's quick-to-judge ex-partner Torres), Duvall turns a by-the-numbers thriller inside out.

Cynthia Rose



Cop rock: Robert Duvall, Joey Hope Singer



# Frauds

Australia 1992

Director: Stephan Elliott

## Certificate

15  
**Distributor**  
 First Independent  
**Production Company**  
 Latent Image  
**Executive Producer**  
 Rebel Penfold-Russell  
**Producers**  
 Andrena Finlay  
 Stuart Quin  
**Production Co-ordinator**  
 Deborah Samuels  
**Production Manager**  
 Sandra Alexander  
**Unit Manager**  
 Wil Milne  
**Location Managers**  
 David Joyce  
 Lori Flekser  
**Casting**  
 Alison Barrett  
**Assistant Directors**  
 Keith Heygate  
 John Martin  
**Additional**  
**Dialogue Director**  
 Carrie Zivetz  
**Screenplay**  
 Stephan Elliott  
**Director of Photography**  
 Geoff Burton  
 In colour  
**Camera Operator**  
 David Williamson  
**Editors**  
 Frans Vandenburg  
 Additional:  
 Brian Kavanagh  
**Supervising Effects Editor**  
 Gary O'Grady  
**Production Designer**  
 Brian Thomson  
**Art Director**  
 Robert Dein  
**Set Decorators**  
 Ro Bruen-Cook  
 Kathy Moyes  
**Draughtsperson**  
 Peter Savage  
**Scenic Artist**  
 Eric Todd  
**Storyboard Artist**  
 Dan Potra  
**Special Effects Supervisor**  
 Dave Young

## Music

Guy Gross  
**Orchestrations**  
 Derek Williams  
**Music Editor**  
 Andrew Lancaster  
**Costume Design**  
 Fiona Spence  
**Wardrobe Supervisor**  
 Kerry Thompson  
**Make-up**  
 Wendy Freeman  
**Title Design**  
 Charles Dickson  
 McMurray  
**Titles**  
 Title House  
**Opticals**  
 Atlab  
**Sound Editors**  
 Dialogue:  
 Tim Jordan  
 John Penders  
**Sound Recordist**  
 Ross Linton  
 Music:  
 Robin Grey  
**Sound Effects Editor**  
 Greg Bell  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
 Bernie Ledger  
**Armourer**  
 Robert Coleby  
**Goose Wranglers**  
 Graham Ware  
 Kirsten Featherstone

## Cast

Phil Collins  
 Roland  
 Hugo Weaving  
 Jonathan  
 Josephine Byrnes  
 Beth  
 Peter Mochrie  
 Michael Allen  
 Helen O'Connor  
 Margaret  
 Mitchell McMahon  
 Young Roland  
 Andrew McMahon  
 Young Matthew  
 Rebel Russell  
 Mother  
 Colleen Clifford  
 Mrs Waterson  
 Nicholas Hammond  
 Detective Simms  
 Kee Chan  
 Detective Alan  
 Christine Ormani  
 Phone Girl  
 Gandhi Macintyre  
 Cartel Valuer  
 Vincent Ball  
 Judge

8,479 feet  
 94 minutes

Australia, the 1960s. No guests have arrived for a spoilt young boy's birthday party. He and his brother wander off to a nearby river where the dice his mother has given him are used to decide who will ride a floating crate. The brother loses and must catch an overhanging spar before reaching a waterfall. He succeeds, but is left dangling and finally falls.

The present day. Beth is a kindergarten teacher married to Jonathan, an office worker who plays with toy soldiers and whose practical joker friend Michael has offered the couple tickets to see *La Bohème*. Forgetting to meet Jonathan at the opera house, Beth arrives home to find a burglar in her kitchen. Stalked by the burglar, she shoots him with a crossbow, piercing



Lost in the funhouse: Phil Collins

his chest. Pulling off his balaclava, he reveals himself as Michael.

Seven weeks later, the couple are visited by dice-tossing insurance agent Roland Copping. He calls at night, asking impertinent questions, altering Beth's paintings and causing her to have nightmares. Copping later returns brandishing a fork missing from the burglary and accuses Jonathan of being Michael's accomplice. Jonathan runs to his war-games shed and rips open the hollow base of his battlefield. The set of silver is, however, hanging on the back of the door with Copping's card attached.

After blackmailing the couple to get their insurance cheque, Copping throws the dice to decide whether to continue but ignores the result when it indicates he shouldn't. When the couple call his bluff, the police visit Beth just as she spots a Christmas tree decorated with the silver in her living room. She prevents its discovery by vomiting on the policemen. Jonathan breaks into Copping's house, a playground full of booby traps and trophies of former torments. He then hides in the back of Copping's car which takes him to the Glendale clinic where Copping visits his brain-damaged, immobilised brother (the boy who fell in the opening sequence).

While Beth distracts Copping at a birthday ball, Jonathan constructs his own booby trap in Copping's house. But Copping, realising he has been fooled, takes Beth to his home and ties Beth to a buzzsaw. Jonathan counters by showing Copping his brother suspended over the pool. However, both traps prove to be fake and the two men end up laughing side by side at the edge of the pool.

A comedy designed to set teeth on edge, *Frauds* exploits the persona of rock star Phil Collins in a primary-coloured *mise en scène* that emphasises a child-like capacity for cruelty and malice. Rock stars often have a Peter Pan quality but you wouldn't cast Collins among them. His appeal is based on a blokeish empathy; and, as it is the script's intention to

convince us that much about male bonding is essentially childish, he might seem a poor choice for the part of man as perpetual brat.

Yet Collins' cheeky-chappie personality and oft-demonstrated capacity for self-mockery make him bizarrely appropriate. After starring in *Buster* and playing a villain in an episode of *Miami Vice*, Collins has learnt to use his unlikeable qualities to advantage. His Roland Copping is supremely irritating; starting out as squeakily solicitous as an undertaker, he soon becomes an eye-rolling, camera-mugging combination of Elton John, Pee Wee Herman and a *Batman* villain. Set design and costume exaggerate his grotesqueness; his home is a Heath Robinson toyshop fantasy, a den of vicious rides and nasty surprises. His yuppie accoutrements - jewellery, business cards, mobile phones and monogrammed suits - grow in prominence to the point of shrieking. This near-perfect example of using one monstrous figure to depict another is slightly spoilt when Collins exults in his character's naughtiness by miming to a female jazz singer - an unwarranted intrusion of the star's musicianly status.

Nevertheless, such an over-the-top figure could hardly subsist in a realist framework, and director Elliott is careful to set up a juvenile sense of wonder. Jonathan and Beth dress and behave like children's TV presenters, all rolled-up sleeves, dungarees and overdone gestures. Jonathan swings from pouty withdrawal, usually in his war-games shed, to wild-eyed excitement at getting his revenge, while Beth is a workaday willing helper, admonishing mother figure and terror-struck victim - anything that helps bring the two men/boys together.

Regrettably, Hugo Weaving (from Jocelyn Moorhouse's *Proof*) is too low-key a performer for the kind of manic slapstick he is put through; but then there are problems of tone throughout. In going all out for a bitter black comedy of unpleasant pranks, Elliott seems determined to affront sensibilities and in this he is intermittently successful; yet the careful accruing of sinister, surreal effects and the childlike atmosphere mitigate against taking seriously the film's questioning of male relationships.

What's more, the element of chance so tantalisingly dangled in the introduction, with its nod to Luke Rhinehart's novel *The Dice Man*, is thrown away the minute Copping decides to make his own mischievous decisions. Even less convincing is the anti-yuppie rhetoric indulged in by Jonathan when his crime is uncovered. What takes *Frauds* out of the ordinary rut is its mining of a seam of strangeness associated with *The Avengers* - a potent field of imagery untapped in recent years. It also bravely bucks audience craving for catharsis by ending with one spoilt brat finding another. This might have made a sharper denouement had we not been invited to despise the central couple from the beginning.

Nick James

# Gemar Gavia (Cup Final)

Israel 1991

Director: Eran Riklis

## Certificate

15  
**Distributor**  
 Gala  
**Production Company**  
 Local Production  
 In association with  
 The Israeli  
 Broadcasting Authority  
 With financial  
 assistance from  
 The Foundation for  
 the Encouragement of  
 Quality Israeli Cinema  
 The Ministry of  
 Education and Culture  
 The Ministry of  
 Industry and  
 Commerce  
**Producer**  
 Michael Sharfshtein  
**Production Co-ordinators**  
 Lee Tal  
 Osnat Tarablesi  
**Production Managers**  
 Gideon Gadi  
 Amitan Menelson  
**Location Manager**  
 Shemi Sheinfeld  
**Assistant Directors**  
 Uri Yerushalmi  
 Adi Arbel  
 Orly Ashkenazy  
**Screenplay**  
 Eyal Halfon  
 Based on an idea  
 by Eran Riklis  
**Director of Photography**  
 Amnon Salomon  
 In colour  
**2nd Camera Operator**  
 Yossef Zicherman  
**Graphics**  
 Yossi Ochayun  
 Studio 106  
**Editor**  
 Anat Lubarsky  
**Art Director**  
 Arie Weiss  
**Set Design**  
 Yossi Peled  
**Special Effects**  
 Yoram Polak  
 Eitam Ravik  
**Music**  
 Raviv Gazit  
**Costume Design**  
 Zemira Hershkovitz  
**Wardrobe**  
 Nurit Levi  
**Make-up**  
 Maskit Korem  
**Sound Editors**  
 Shabtai Sarig  
 Tami Shir  
**Music Sound Recordist**  
 Yizha Ashdot  
**Sound Effects**  
 Yankol Goldwasser  
**Arabic Consultant**  
 Ibrahim Abd El Kadr

## Cast

Moshe Ivgi  
 Cohen  
 Muhammad Bacri  
 Ziad  
 Salim Dau  
 Mussa  
 Basam Zuamut  
 Abu Eyash  
 Yusef Abu Warda  
 George  
 Suhel Haddad  
 Omar  
 Ganan Abbass  
 Shukri  
 Sharon Alexander  
 Lieutenant Gallili  
 Johnny Arbid  
 Fatchi  
 Sami Samir  
 Halil  
 Meir Swisa  
 Doctor Beni  
 Gadi Fur  
 Haimon  
 Victor Kamar  
 Abu Yusef  
 Rada Ibrahim  
 Yusef's Wife  
 Roberto Polak  
 Davidi  
 Shai Aviri  
 Neuman  
 David Sabar  
 Morer  
 Ofer Zohar  
 Leon  
 Doron Linik  
 Itzik  
 Uri Ran-Klausner  
 Doron Sabari  
 Soldiers at the  
 Wedding  
 Sharon Goresch  
 Bride  
 Faraz Hanina  
 Groom  
 Hani  
 Boy with Ball  
 Moshe Bacher  
 Soldier at Roadblock

9,848 feet  
 109 minutes  
 Original running time  
 114 minutes

## Subtitles

Lebanon, June '82. Cohen, a soldier in the Israeli Reserves, mournfully leafs through his tickets to attend the World Cup matches in Barcelona - an ambition now thwarted by the war. As his unit advances, it is attacked by a retreating group of PLO fighters, leaving only himself and young Lt Gallili alive. Considering them valuable as hostages, the PLO soldiers take them back to Beirut. Traveling on foot over increasingly rough terrain, the eight-strong unit treats its captives with suspicion and overt hostility, goaded by the motorised advance of the Israeli troops. When set upon by sniper fire, Gallili takes his chance to



escape but is gunned down by his captors. They continue their journey.

The PLO men now begin to talk with Cohen, tetchily at first, the conversation weighted with their political and linguistic differences. His captors begin to assume individual identities in his eyes: Ziad, the leader, is a fair man who shares Cohen's love of football; Abu Eyash is generous, almost fatherly; Mussa is the resident clown; Omar the academic. Along the way they take shelter in bombed-out buildings, at a wedding, an abandoned pool hall and a palatial mansion, the group gradually being reduced by the odd sniper bullet or unseen mine. They talk about football and family, tease and learn about each other, their relations always undercut by the precariousness of their futures. Cohen makes a break for it but is soon apprehended; but rather than punishing him, Ziad considers it quite reasonable behaviour and begins to talk about his life.

As the group reaches the outskirts of Beirut by night, the one remaining obstacle is the main road, heavily guarded by a squad of Israeli troops who seem distracted by the match on TV. Cohen gives Ziad his ticket for the Cup Final as a token of good luck, but only one of the group makes it across before the troops open fire. As Ziad is loaded into an ambulance the next day, Cohen goes in search of a cigarette for him, but by the time he returns it has driven away. Cohen breaks down, sobbing uncontrollably.

In a quest to look beyond the grand schema of Arab-Israeli conflict, *Cup Final* opts for a study in personalities, like a mirror-imaged *Dirty Dozen*. Following a group of The Enemy as they transform in their captive's eyes from anonymous menace to caring, sharing bunch of individuals – family men with machine guns – director Riklis describes his film as offering “the possibility of coexistence... a human story from a bloody war”. Not



No score draw: Muhammad Bacri

insignificantly, the first loss on the retreat back to Beirut is Gallili who, decidedly unconciliatory in his brief screen life, has spent his spare moments either kicking or threatening the hostages. Once he's been judiciously dispatched, the others assume a curiously humanitarian bearing, avoiding rather than initiating armed conflict, and seemingly incapable of the massacre with which they announced their arrival on the scene. Later, when a renegade PLO fighter roughs up Cohen, the rest of the unit visibly blanching in disgust, it's clearly only a matter of time before he gets his come-uppance. This simplistically philanthropic view of men at war – the few irredeemable bad apples spoiling it for the rest but ultimately getting their just deserts – makes for affectionate but confused viewing.

Football and fighting: two scenes of conflict, men on men going for the big prize, parallel themes that cross back and forth through the plot. Sharing a fanhood for the Italian soccer squad, Ziad and Cohen straddle common cultural ground, which limits their presumed difference. It's the Cup Final that's playing on TV as the remaining PLO men make their abortive run past the checkpoint; Italy scores the winning goal just as the bodies slump to the road, the cheering soundtrack foregrounded. “No winners in this game,” runs the film's tag line, and it's like a mantra repeated throughout. War is hell. Sure – these men are good. Why, then, are they fighting?

But apart from some vague conversations between Cohen and his captors about their respective politics, this question is roundly avoided; ideological conflict is consigned to allegorical billiard and football games, underscored by meaningful looks and telling silences that leave much unsaid. Couched in the gesture of barroom rather than battleground rivalry, the sporting metaphors obscure the motivations that *Cup Final* addresses, consigning the passion and savagery of war to a largely euphemised status. Death, in the shape of sniper bullets and unseen mines, cleanly punctuates the film's individual episodes but is never dwelt upon, figuring more as a device of dramatic closure than a lived and enervating everyday reality.

Effectively using the war as its backdrop rather than being about the war, the film finds its saving grace in the performance of Moshe Ivgy as Cohen. Flickering between introspection and nervous outbursts of ebullience, Ivgy has the crumpled charm and looks of Charles Aznavour; without him, director Eran Riklis would have had just some liberal intentions and a few ‘types’ to tell his story. But performance can only carry *Cup Final* so far. As Cohen slumps up against the jeep and begins to sob – an ending that consciously mirrors the beginning – the telegraphed conclusion is that nothing has changed. Therein lies the tragedy of war; that nothing has really been explored is the cinematic one.

Paul Tarrago

## Indecent Proposal

USA 1993

Director: Adrian Lyne

Certificate  
15

Distributor  
UIP

Production Company  
Paramount Pictures

Executive Producers  
Tom Schulman  
Alex Gartner

Producer  
Sherry Lansing

Co-producer  
Michael Tadross

Production Co-ordinator  
Terry Ladin

Unit Production Managers  
George Manasse  
Michael Tadross

Location Managers  
Ned Shapiro

Eric Klosterman

Casting  
Victoria Thomas

Voice:  
Barbara Harris

Assistant Directors  
Aldric Porter

Ian Woolf

Ruth Redfern

Screenplay  
Amy Holden Jones

Based on the novel  
by Jack Engelhard

Director of Photography  
Howard Atherton

Colour  
Deluxe

Camera Operator  
Craig Haagensen

24 Frame Video Display  
Video Image

Video Technical Supervisor  
Kevan Jensen

Editor  
Joe Hutshing

Production Designer  
Mel Bourne

Art Director  
Gae Buckley

Set Decorator  
Etta Leff

Set Dressers  
Las Vegas:

Richard Garcia

James Halstead

Craig Heine

David Snodgrass

Special Effects  
Co-ordinator

David Kelsey

Music  
John Barry

Music performed by  
Piano:

Michael Lang

Orchestrations  
Greig McRitchie

Music Supervisor  
Kathy Nelson

Music Editor  
Clif Kohlweck

Costume Design  
Bobbie Read

Bernie Pollack

Beatrice Aruna Pasztor

Wardrobe Supervisors  
Elinor Bardach

Mira Zavidowsky

Make-up Artists  
Ben Nye Jnr

Dennis Liddiard

Richard Dean

Title Design  
R/Greenberg

Associates West Inc

Titles/Opticals  
Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor  
Alan Robert Murray

Dialogue Editors  
Karen Spangenberg

Lucy Coldsnow-Smith

Karen Wilson

Michael Magill

Supervising ADR Editor  
Juno J. Ellis

ADR Editors  
Denise Horta

Stephen Janisz

Supervising Foley Editor  
Pam Bentkowski

Foley Editors  
Christine Danelski

Scott Jackson

Sound Recordists  
Keith Wester

ADR:  
Bob Baron

Foley:  
Greg Curda

Music:  
Shawn Murphy

Dolby Stereo

Sound Re-recordists  
Andy Nelson

Steve Pederson

Scott Millan

Sound Effects Editors  
Walter Newman

Gary Wright

Suhail Kafity

Richard Burton

Gary Krivacek

Foley Artists  
David Lee Fein

Ken Dufva

Stunt Co-ordinator  
Walter Scott

Cast  
Robert Redford

John Gage

Demi Moore

Diana Murphy

Woody Harrelson

David Murphy

Seymour Cassel

Mr Shackleford

Oliver Platt

Jeremy

Billy Bob Thornton

Day Tripper

Rip Taylor

Mr Langford

Billy Connolly

Auction Emcee

Joel Brooks

Realtor

Pierre Epstein

Van Buren

Danny Zorn

Kevin West

Screenwriters

Pamela Holt

David's Girlfriend

Tommy Bush

David's Father

Mariclaire Costello

David's Mother

Curt Odle

David's Boss

Jedda Jones

Myra J

Edwonda White

Craps Women

James Migliore

Craps Stick Man

Nick Georgiade

Croupier

Ritamaria Kelly

Dress Shop Saleslady

Sam Micco

Sam

Joseph Ruskin

Pit Boss

Joe La Due

High Roller

Ben W. Fluker

Roulette Croupier

Carleen Sbordone

Coffee Shop Waitress

Toru Nagai

High Roller Card-man

Steven Dean

Craps Pit Boss

Frank J. Allison

Craps Box Man

Dana Williams

Jeremy's Secretary

David Cousin

Craps Dealer

Catlyn Day

Wine Goddess

Irene Olga Lopez

Gage's Maid

Dru Davis

Bernice

Rudy Morrison

Maitre D'

Richard B. Livingston

Mike

Joe Bays

Jeffrey

David Rees

Businessman

Françoise Bush

Woman in Restaurant

Elizabeth Gardner

Real Estate

Receptionist

Art Cabrera

Israel Juarbe

Lydia Nicole

Iqbal Theba

Maurice Sherbanee

Yasemin Baytok

Elsa Raven

Citizenship Students

Matthew Barry

Chi-Muoi Lo

Art Chudabala

Michelle C. O'Brien

Hilary Reynolds

Rebecca Howard

Architecture Students

Selma Archerd

Katherine Pope

Jerome Rosenfeld

Nancy Thom

Auction Bidders

Robert "Bobby Z" Zajonc

Alan Purwin

Helicopter Pilots

Neil Looy

Harold A. Kalinsky

Robert T. Convey

Bruce H. Redding

Pilots

Sheena Easton

As Herself

Herbie Hancock

As Himself

10,512 feet

117 minutes

Seven years into their marriage, college sweethearts David and Diana Murphy are still very much in love. They live together in Los Angeles where David pursues a successful career as an architect and Diana works as a real estate agent. When the recession creeps up on them, David loses his job, Diana finds her business slowing down and the half-built dream home that David has designed is threatened with repossession by the bank. The Murphys go to Las Vegas, hoping to win the extra \$50,000 that they need; on their first day they win \$25,000. Later, browsing in a clothes shop, Diana is approached by an elegant older man; he offers to buy her a dress, but she refuses. The next day, David and Diana lose all their money. Heartbroken, they tour the gambling dens, and find the mystery man – John Gage – playing at one of the tables. He asks to borrow Diana for luck in a one million dollar gamble; she reluctantly agrees and Gage wins. Gage invites Diana and David to be his guests, and sends Diana the dress that she liked. Gage offers the couple a million dollars in exchange for one night with Diana; after much soul searching, they agree and a contract is drawn up by their lawyer friend Jeremy. David has second thoughts and tries in vain to chase after Diana, but Gage has already whisked her away by helicopter to his yacht.

Diana and David return home, agreeing never to discuss the incident, but find their efforts have been in vain, as the house is repossessed. Later, David suspects that Diana is still seeing Gage, and the couple's relations deteriorate. Diana decides to try and buy back their land; she discovers that it has been bought by Gage and confronts him. When David learns that she has seen him, he believes his suspicions to be founded and moves out. Gage turns up at Diana's office and she is forced to show him around some properties. Diana finds the insistent Gage hard to shake off, and eventually becomes his lover. David still grieves for Diana and attempts unsuccessfully to win her back, but later learns that she wants a divorce. At a charity ►



◀ auction, David bids a million dollars for a hippo in Diana's name, and presents her with the signed papers; the two talk while Gage looks on. While driving home, Gage tells Diana that she is the best of the 'Million Dollar Club' and that he has struck similar deals before. Diana asks to finish their affair and is dropped off on the highway. She takes a bus to the pier where David once proposed to her; David is also there and they pledge their love for each other.

● Halfway through this *Honeymoon in Vegas* without the gags (or the flying Elvises), we catch a 10-second glimpse of a young woman reading Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*. Product placement for last year's feminist bible? More like Adrian Lyne's sly little nod towards a book that rumbled his much-debated *Fatal Attraction*. Faludi joined other critics in taking the film to task for its demonizing portrayal of the independent career woman and its beatification of the family. The film was emblematic of the 'backlash' movement that Faludi believed erupted in America in the 80s, with its idea that "women were unhappy because they were too free; their liberation had denied them marriage and motherhood."

Perhaps Lyne is hoping that *Indecent Proposal* will merit a mention in *Backlash 2*, since it so cockily invites feminist censure and so baldly attempts to be of its moment by playing with the current preoccupation with the demise of 80s-style pecuniary values. But zeitgeist movies cannot be so easily fabricated. The bland and transparent *Indecent Proposal* fails to be controversial; it also fails to be the erotic thriller that it is trailed as.

In a film that could use a few twists and turns, the most surprising thing is that it is written by Amy Jones, who wrote and directed *Love Letters*, a low-budget movie that merited considerable critical attention when it was released in the mid-80s. Originating from the Roger Corman exploitation stable (which dictated some obligatory nude scenes), it was an ironic play on the conventions of the 'woman's movie', that followed a brilliant young career woman's obsessive affair with a married man. Jones' heroine, rather than being consumed by the dangerous liaison, comes to a self-understanding that enables her to walk away bereft but wiser. An intimate film full of careful observations on the hazards of relationships, *Love Letters* rewrote the romance genre.

*Indecent Proposal*, however, sets itself up as an old-fashioned (read: regressive) 'love story' with a high-minded moral that makes it supposedly hip to the 90s. You've heard the one about how "money can't buy love"? As Gage says, "let's test the cliché." Dangerous words to use in a film riddled with them. The threat to Diana and David is not impending death, or another lover, but cash and the lack of it. Their prettily bohemian 2CV lifestyle masks the

fact that they are still entrenched in 80s values and the dream of a luxury home by the sea. They have overreached themselves already. So their cards are surely marked as they drive to the neon hell of Las Vegas to gratify all their worldly desires.

Lyne spares us the subtleties; this is the Faustian pact writ large, and no doubt Gage's hand-made leather shoes hide well-manicured cloven hooves. When it comes to the devil, the male of the species is always immaculate, and ideally dressed by Cerruti or Armani. Compare and contrast with Alex the unkempt temptress in *Fatal Attraction*. Gage plays the same tricks as Alex, sinisterly popping up in Diana's life in his attempts to lure her. But unlike her, Gage is the acceptable, dimpled face of adultery. Redford plays him as President Charming, ready to whisk Diana away from it all—surely a self-made Perot figure but with the Clinton smile that women are supposed to go wild for. His 'Million Dollar Club' is supposedly the only sicko chink in his otherwise shining armour.

Gage is the archetypal Mills and Boon romantic hero, but is this film the substance of every girl's dreams? One could speculate on a little role reversal: imagine a Cerruti-clad Catherine Deneuve offering to buy David the well-cut pair of trousers that he covets. Imagine on; once again it is the woman who is the object of the raw deal and the currency of the exchange. Despite her protestations that she is not for sale, Diana is the modern manifestation of the bartered bride, a sign of one man's spending power over another. While David and Diana engage in the kitchen and bathroom sex obligatory in a Lyne movie, Gage's prowess is measured in what he can buy. Sex between Gage and Diana is fetishised into a dressing-up routine as Diana is turned into another pretty woman that he can adorn more than adore.

What then of the decent proposal? In a champagne-ad beach tryst at the beginning of the film, David asks Diana to marry him. Seven years and x months later, the two conveniently return to their romantic haunt, and it's another advert. The pack shot frames their entwined hands with their wedding rings sparkling in the dawn light. As every girl knows, the truest riches are to be found in that band of gold.

**Lizzie Francke**



He bought her company: Redford, Moore

## Jack the Bear

USA 1993

Director: Marshall Herskovitz

### Certificate

12

### Distributor

20th Century Fox

### Production Company

20th Century Fox

An American

Filmworks/

Lucky Dog production

### Executive Producer

Ron Yerxa

### Producer

Bruce Gilbert

### Associate Producer

Peter Burrell

### Production Supervisor

Gary Stanek

### Production Co-ordinator

Nanette Siegart

### Unit Production Manager

Peter Burrell

### Location Manager

Kristan Wagner

### Post-production

Co-ordinator

Debra Michael

### Casting

Mary Goldberg

Midwest:

Jane Brody

### Assistant Directors

Nilo Otero

Mathew Dunne

Margaret Plane

### Screenplay

Steven Zaillian

Based on the novel

by Dan McCall

### Director of Photography

Fred Murphy

### Colour

Deluxe

### Camera Operators

Michael Stone

Frank Perl

### Opticals

Alan Munro

### Editor

Steven Rosenblum

### Production Designer

Lily Kilvert

### Art Director

John Warnke

### Set Design

James Truesdale

### Set Decorator

Cricket Rowland

### Special Effects

Co-ordinator

Dick Wood

### Special Effects

William D. Lee

### Music

James Horner

### Music Extract

"Concerto for Piano

and Orchestra No. 21.

C Major, K.467 Allegro

Maestro" performed

by Murray Perahia,

Chamber Orchestra

of Europe

### Music performed by

James Horner

Ian Underwood

Ralph Grierson

Clayton Haslop

Jim Walker

Tommy Morgan

### Music Editor

Jim Henrickson

### Songs

"Darkness, Darkness"

by Jesse Colin Young,

performed by The

Youngbloods; "Teenage

Nervous Breakdown"

by Lowell George,

performed by Little

Feat; "(I've Got a Gal In)

Kalamazoo" by Harry

Warren, Mack Gordon,

performed by Glenn

Miller and his

Orchestra; "Moonlight

Serenade" by and

performed by Glenn

Miller; "When a Man

### Loves a Woman" by

Calvin Lewis, Andrew

Wright, performed

by Percy Sledge;

"Gimme Some Lovin'"

by Steve Winwood,

Muff Winwood,

Spencer Davis,

performed by Spencer

Davis Group; "Today"

by Marty Balin, Paul

Kantner, performed

by Jefferson Airplane;

"Section 43" by Joe

McDonald, performed

by Country Joe & the

Fish; "Can't Find My

Way Home" by Steve

Winwood, performed

by Blind Faith; "I Shall

Be Released" by Bob

Dylan, performed

by The Band; "Dream

Lover" by Bobby Darin,

performed by

Rick Nelson

### Costume Design

Deborah L. Scott

### Make-up

Zoltan Elek

Katalin Elek

### Title Design

Kathie Broyles

Jeffrey Okun

### Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

### Supervising Sound Editor

Gregory M. Gerlich

### Sound Editors

Gary S. Gerlich

Harry E. Snodgrass

Teri Dorman

Richard LeGrand

William Jacobs

### Supervising ADR Editor

Petra Bach

### ADR Editor

Robert Ulrich

### Sound Recordists

Jeff Wexler

Bob Renga

Bill Bateman

### Music:

Shawn Murphy

### ADR Recordists

Robert Biggart

Jeff Gomillion

Brad Brock

### Foley Recordist

Troy Porter

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Sergio Reyes

Chris David

Tex Rudloff

### Sound Effects

Visiontrax

### Foley Artists

Diane Marshall

Greg Barbanell

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Loren Jones

### Stunts

Richard Drown

Debbie Evans

Jerry Gatlin

William S. Grisco

Anthony M. Jefferson

Bobby Porter

Lori Lynn Ross

Fred Scialla

### Film Extracts

*Invasion of the Body*

*Snatchers* (1956); *Them!*

(1954); *Abbott and*

*Costello Meet Frankenstein*

(1948); *Frankenstein*

(1931); *The Wolf Man*

(1940); *Cheaper By the*

*Dozen* (1950); *The Fly*

(1958)

### Cast

Danny DeVito

John Leary

Robert J. Steinmiller Jr

Jack Leary

Miko Hughes

Dylan Leary

Gary Sinise

Norman Strick

Art LaFleur

Mr Festinger

Stefan Gierasch

Grandpa Glickes

Erica Yohn

Grandma Glickes

Andrea Marcovicci

Elizabeth Leary

Julia Louis-Dreyfus

Peggy Etinger

Reese Witherspoon

Karen Morris

Bert Remsen

Mr Mitchell

Carl Gabriel Yorke

Gordon Layton

Lee Garlington

Mrs Festinger

Lorinne Vozoff

Mrs Mitchell

Justin Mosley Spink

Dexter Mitchell

Jahary Bennett

Michael

Lillian Hightower Domio

Mrs Sampson

Troy Slaten

Edward Festinger

Jessica Steinmiller

Katie Festinger

Douglas Tolbert

Ray

### Christopher Lawford

Vince Buccini

Cliff Bemis

Detective Marker

Charles Dugan

Mr Strick

Marion Dugan

Mrs Strick

Sam Freed

Mr Morris

Dorothy Lyman

Mrs Morris

Kevin McDermott

Cop

Rob Dunn

Construction Worker

Christy Botkin

Nursery School

Teacher

Vonna Bowen

Nurse

Steven McCall

Studio Technician

Donovan Leitch

Sarah Bork





Who's been eating my porridge? Danny DeVito

Dylan comes home too. One evening, Jack is playing a piano piece, called 'Jack the Bear', taught to him by his mother. He and his father talk about the past and the future, and suddenly Dylan starts to talk again. When the local children next come round asking to see monsters, John tells them that there is no such thing.

Following in the footsteps of Edward Zwick, his other half in the *thirtysomething* creative team, Marshall Herskovitz has taken to the big screen. And anyone expecting the winsome, liberal cosiness of the Philadelphia-set soap will not be disappointed. In many ways, though, this is more like the TV series *The Wonder Years* meeting *To Kill A Mockingbird*. If the period feel, soundtrack, comic details – such as an earnestly ridiculous hippy teacher – and pubescent romance stuff belong to the former, the idea springs from the latter.

Except that this film's Boo Radley really is a monster. While *To Kill A Mocking Bird* proves that fear is the basis of prejudice, this superficially more politically conscious film ironically seems to end up saying the opposite. Gary Sinise's blank-faced loner Norman is a fantasy hybrid of psycho Norman Bates, bogey man Michael Myers, child-snatcher and crazed Nazi. As such, were he the product of Jack's fevered imagination, he would make considerably more sense to the film than he does. Instead, by representing a real 'evil', he is so incredible as to undermine any of the issues that his behaviour raises.

This may be partly because the viewpoint in the film – Jack's – is there in name only. His narration does no more than fill in details. And although he is supposed to be working through his grief over his mother, anger at his father and alienation in a new neighbourhood, there's remarkably little subjectivity here; things actually are as

he perceives them. Despite the constant references to his fear (of monsters), visualised through him watching his father playing TV monsters in between late-night horror shows, the quasi-Freudian links the film seems to ask us to make between real and imaginary monsters are never satisfactorily played out.

Jack's luridly-coloured flashback memories of his mother are similarly frustrating; the bitty nature of the film makes it hard to fit them in to Jack's experiences and relationships. In fact, much of *Jack the Bear* is purposelessly episodic: the Learys' neighbours, whose desperate psyches are just glimpsed, may provide a refreshing angle on the usual happy images of suburban childhood but their effect is of throwaway background detail.

Danny DeVito puts on his best serious performance as the child-like father, as unable as his son to come to terms with the death of his wife. Too much of this, though, consists of sad, sidelong looks backed up by fiddly 'emotional' music and imperceptible sighs. Playing up his decent, funny side leaves little room to explore the negative emotions that Jack keeps talking about, but which only rise to the surface – briefly and efficiently – at the end of the film.

Although Robert Steinmiller Jr as Jack does his best to hold all the threads together, the film rambles between glycerine sentimentality (where it has anything to do with Jack's little brother Dylan), dealing patly with such issues as Norman's racism and sloughing through emotions in an annoyingly knowing, post-therapy manner. Its effect is that of a TV series that has been telescoped and packed, with each of its rather glib resolutions, into an hour and a half. Despite a surfeit of material, nothing is thorny enough to sustain and the result is a long haul.

Amanda Lipman

## Jamón, Jamón

Spain 1992

Director: Bigas Luna

### Certificate

18

### Distributor

Metro Pictures

### Production Company

Lolafilms

### Producer

Andres Vicente Gomez

### Associate Producers

Manuel Lombardero

Pepo Sol

### Casting

Consol Tura

### Assistant Directors

Eusebio Graciani

Pau de la Sierra

Berta Marsé

### Screenplay

Cuca Canals

Bigas Luna

### Additional Dialogue

Quim Monzo

### Director of Photography

J.L. Alcaine

In colour

### Camera Operator

Julio Madurga

Ramón Pedriguero

### Steadicam Operator

Carles Cabecerán

### Video

Belén Lemaitre

### Editor

Pablo Del Amo

### Art Directors

Chu Uroz

Noemí Campano

### Set Design

Pep Olive

### Set Decorator

Pedro Gaspar

### Special Effects

Reyes Abades

### Music

Nicola Piovanni

### Music Performed by

Unione Musicisti

Di Roma

### Songs

"Hazmeio otra vez"

by Concha V. Miranda,

performed by Moncho;

"Vouce atusou

by A. Carlos Jocañ,

performed by Nadia

Godoy; "Mi chocha

pechosa" by Mauro

Endara, performed

by Los Melodicos;

"Asi me guesta mi"

by R. Garci, performed

by Chimo Bayo;

"Destroy Yourself"

by Jordi Batiste-Triado,

performed by Sergio

Ortiz; "Cumbarroa"

by E. Vazquez Amor,

T. Gonzalez Garrigol,

performed by La

Bandes de Encinacorva,

Zaragoza

### Wardrobe

Neus Olivella

### Make-up

B. Villanueva

### Sound Editor

Dialogue:

Francisco Peramos

### Sound Recordist

Miguel Rejas

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Richard Casals

J. A. Castro

### Sound Effects

Luis Castro

### Subtitles

Barry Sibley

Screen Services

### Cast

Penélope Cruz

Silvia

Anna Galiena

Carmen

Javier Bardem

Raúl

Stefania Sandrelli

Conchita

Juan Diego

Manuel

Jordi Molla

José Luis

Tomas Penco

Raúl's friend

Armando Del Rio

José Luis' friend

Diana Sassen

Silvia's friend

Chema Mazo

Silvia's father

Isabel De Castro Oros

Silvia's sister

Marianne Hermitte

Maria Renio

Girls in Puticlub

Nadia Godoy

Singer in Puticlub

Susana Koska

Miguel Garcia

Friends at Disco

Roberto Bermejo

Bullfighter

Guaca López de la Sierra

Puticlub Parrot

Lira Herce De Gibas

Puticlub Puppy

Banda de Encinacorva,

Zaragoza

Fiesta Musicians

8,481 feet

94 minutes

### Subtitles

In the arid region of Los Monegros, village girl Silvia lives with her mother Carmen, who runs a roadside brothel. Silvia works at the nearby underwear factory and has become pregnant by José Luis, son of factory owners Manuel and Conchita. Although José Luis is willing to marry Silvia, their wedding plans are opposed by Conchita, who is convinced that Silvia is only after their money. She recruits Raúl, a young man who works at a ham warehouse and hopes to become a bullfighter, to seduce Silvia into forgetting about José Luis. Confident of success, Raúl finds his attempts to get acquainted firmly repulsed: he helps Silvia recover a pig,

offers her a lift in his ham-promoting trailer, and embraces her at the local dance-hall, but she rewards him with no more than a hearty clout.

José Luis proposes an inspired marketing scheme to his father Manuel: underwear for dogs. When this is received with derision, he turns for consolation to Carmen, who has no qualms about giving him a warm welcome. Raúl and a friend practise their bullfighting skills at night in a cattle compound, adding to the risk by performing nude; chased off by the owner, they take refuge at Silvia's home. She lends them clothes and throws them out when Raúl again tries his luck. Meanwhile, Conchita has decided that she wants Raúl for herself; getting him into bed, she promises him a motorbike if he gives up the pursuit of Silvia. He is happy to accept, but when he falls off the bike and Silvia rushes to his aid, they both realise the extent of their feelings for each other. Silvia accuses José Luis of immaturity, and consummates her love for Raúl during a thunderstorm.

Distraught at losing Silvia, José Luis reveals to his mother that the girl is pregnant. Equally upset at losing Raúl, Conchita makes moves to get him back: she tells Silvia that Raúl was bribed into making love to her, and tells Raúl that Silvia is pregnant by José Luis. The promise of a Mercedes, along with Conchita's sexual favours, proves a seductive argument, and Raúl yields to Conchita. José Luis, however, pays another visit to Carmen while Silvia, left alone, is unexpectedly consoled by Manuel. Finding his mother with Raúl at the ham warehouse, José Luis attacks his rival with the only available weapon, a side of ham, and the two men batter each other until José Luis is felled. Over his corpse, cradled by Carmen, the participants in the tragedy silently contemplate the consequences of having yielded to their appetites.

The teasing humour of Bigas Luna, industrial and interior designer turned film-maker, has won him a number of European festival mentions and a growing notoriety, but as yet no unanimous international recognition. This could have something to do with his taste for the unconventional, often exposed in clinical detail, as with his second film *Caniche* (1978), about a wife whose passion for her pet poodle drives her husband to extremes of infidelity with a stray Alsatian, or his third, *Bilbao* (1978), about an amateur photographer so obsessed with a prostitute that he kidnaps her, shaves off her body hair and empties a bottle of milk over her unconscious form. Contrary to such surprises, the best of Luna is intriguingly elliptical: in *Reborn* (1981), featuring Dennis Hopper as a hell-fire television evangelist, the idea of God patrolling the urban skies in a helicopter has more to offer than the film is finally prepared to confront; but even in its evasiveness *Reborn* is a vision to be taken seriously.

By contrast, the problem with ►



◀ *Jamón, Jamón*, is that it can't be taken seriously on any level. Luna has reverted to domestic fantasy, the mood for his earlier films, but not this time in a spirit of eccentric exploration; instead, he is intent on satire of the broadest kind, incorporating what he calls "six magnificent characters, prototypes of our country". In his notes Luna exuberantly prepares us for trouble: Silvia "represents what's best in the world", Raúl is a "parcel bomb, the obscure object of desire", Manuel personifies "the new European imperialism", Conchita is "a wonder, one f\*\*\* of a mother", and so on.

If, by some Godardian method, he had introduced these observations into the film, Luna's derisive undermining of his characters might have forestalled his audience's bewilderment; but without commentary his storytelling wanders too arbitrarily between slapstick eroticism and an exaggerated neo-realism to achieve any clarity of focus. It is evident enough, from the heavy symbolism of the giant cut-out bull on the hillside, its potency at risk from every strong breeze, that an overview of the Spanish predicament is being offered; but that Luna's prototypes, with their farcical innocence and ungovernable hungers, are more Spanish than universally human (if humanity deserves to be viewed with such cynical affection) remains unsubstantiated.

In Luna's doctrine, Spanish sexual and eating habits are closely linked, so that his osculating couples sample each other with avid comments on the flavour of various bits of anatomy: Silvia tastes of potato to one admirer, of onion to another, and even when not being consumed she invites appreciation as "una mujer jamona", a nice bit of meat. The cast abandons its dignity to these gastronomic excesses with admirable generosity – although less conducive to nausea is the embrace in which a stud and his mistress discuss what kind of motorbike he'll get in return for his services. But it is disconcerting to watch actresses of the calibre of Stefania Sandrelli and Anna Galiena (the 'ideal' woman from *The Hairdresser's Husband*) resorting to such levels of overstatement.

Luna films them in laudatory Panavision, along with the lugubrious wastes of the Monegros region, a desert bisected by a single uncaring highway. But apart from his final tableau of lip-smacking despair (a Buñuelian flock approaches from the horizon as the distraught lovers clutch each other in terminal paralysis) is less interesting visually than usual. Rather, he has seized upon an assortment of scatological diversions – an 'audition' of men's briefs, a nude bullfight, a Coke can as a target in a urination contest – to prepare the way for his climactic irony, a battle to the death with sides of ham as cudgels. As demonstrated in his best-known film, *Anguish* (1986), a Chinese-box horror film about horror films, he can be more inventively outrageous than this, and with better reason.

**Philip Strick**

## Map of the Human Heart

United Kingdom/Australia 1992

Director: Vincent Ward

**Certificate**  
15

**Distributor**

**Rank**

**Production Companies**

Working Title/

Map Films (London)/

Vincent Ward Films

(Sydney)/Les Films

Ariane (Paris)/Sunrise

Films (Toronto)

For Polygram Filmed

Entertainment/

Australian Film

Finance Corporation

**Executive Producers**

Graham Bradstreet

Harvey Weinstein

Bob Weinstein

**Producers**

Tim Bevan

Vincent Ward

**Co-producers**

Timothy White

Canada:

Linda Beath

Paul Saltzman

France:

Sylvaine Sainderichin

**Associate Producer**

Redmond Morris

**Production Executive**

France:

Josselyne Buccioli

**Production Supervisor**

France:

Janine Ruault

**Production Co-ordinators**

Canada:

Janine Anderton

United Kingdom:

Tori Parry

Australia:

Janet Cook

**Production Managers**

Canada:

Irene Litinsky

United Kingdom:

Fiona Morham

**Unit Manager**

Steve Woloshen

**Location Managers**

Montreal:

Michel Pradier

Arctic:

Stefan Pleszczynski

**Post-production**

**Supervisor**

Sylvia Walker-Wilson

**Casting**

Lucie Robitaille

Kate Dowd

USA:

Johanna Ray

Donna Jacobsen

Toronto:

Levy Comerford

**Casting**

**Assistant Directors**

Pedro Gandol

Canada:

Carole Dubuc

Normand Labelle

Shauna Patterson

**2nd Unit:**

Normand Bourgie

United Kingdom:

Redmond Morris

**Screenplay**

Louis Nowra

**Story**

Vincent Ward

**Director of Photography**

Eduardo Serra

In colour

**2nd Unit Directors**

**of Photography**

Sylvain Brault

Alun Bollinger

**Model Photography**

Dennis Lowe

Alex Amyot

**Aerial Photography**

Peter Allwork

**Camera Operators**

Pascal Ridao

United Kingdom:

David Worley

**Steadicam Operators**

United Kingdom:

Peter Robertson

**Editors**

John Scott

Australia:

Frans Vandenburg

**Production Designer**

John Beard

**Art Directors**

Jean Baptiste Tard

United Kingdom:

Rod McLean

**Set Decorators**

Michele Forest

Diane Gauthier

**Draughtsmen**

Raymond Larose

Lev Bereznycky

United Kingdom:

Anthony Rimmington

**Scenic Artist**

United Kingdom:

Brian Bishop

**Storyboard Artists**

Christian Benard

United Kingdom:

John Frankish

Australia:

Karl Fourdrinier

**Special Effects Supervisor**

Richard Conway

**Special Effects**

Bob Hollow

Steve Hamilton

David McCall

United Kingdom:

Dave Eltham

Tim Willis

Steve Onions

**Models**

Terry Bridle

Nigel Brackley

Nigel Nixon

Peter Dowker

Peter Borowski

United Kingdom:

Greg Morgan

Robert Scott

Andrew Kelly

**Music**

Gabriel Yared

**Music Extracts**

"Song of Angituaik"

from "Musiques et

Chants Inuit"; "Noye's

Fludde" by Benjamin

Britten, performed by

Donald Maxwell, Linda

Ormiston, Richard

Pasco, Coull String

Quartet, Members of

Endymion Ensemble,

Richard Hickox

**Music Supervisor**

Canada:

Jean Robitaille

**Songs**

"La Cass" performed

by Dominique

Tremblay, Philippe

Gagnon; "Severina"

from Café Victoria

by I Salonisti by

Oscar Guidi

**Costume Design**

Renee April

United Kingdom:

Penny Rose

**Wardrobe Masters**

Mario Davignon

United Kingdom:

Stewart Meachem

**Make-up Artist**

Micheline Trepanier

**Prosthetics Make-up**

Charles Carter

**Supervising Sound Editor**

Andrew Plain

**Dialogue Editor**

Livia Ruzic

**ADR Editors**

Liz Goldfinch

Danielle Wiessner

**ADR Supervisors**

United Kingdom:

Derek Holding

Bob Risk

Russ Wollnough

Ted Swanscott

Matthew Roberts

Australia:

Peter Townend

**Sound Recordists**

Location:

Pierre Camus

ADR:

Pierre Charron

Australia:

Foley:

Steve Burgess

ADR:

Simon Hewitt

Music:

Herve Le Coz

**Sound Re-recordists**

Gethin Creagh

Martin Oswin

**Sound Effects Editors**

Anne Breslin

James Manche

**Sound Effects Research**

Steve Spencer

**Foley Artists**

Jerry Long

Paul Pirola

**Inuit Consultant**

Elisapi Davidee

**Medical Consultant**

Dr Frances Gorzalka

**Stunt Co-ordinators**

Canada:

Minor Mustain

United Kingdom:

Martin Grace

**Stunts**

Paul Rutledge

Cotton Mather

Stephanie Lefebvre

Marc Desourdy

Jean Frenette

Allison Reid

Jamie Jones

Ron Van Hart

Jennifer McKeown

Yves Langlois

Jim Dunn

United Kingdom:

Elaine Ford

Nick Gillard

**Cast**

Jason Scott Lee

Avik

Robert Joamie

Young Avik

Anne Parillaud

Albertine

Annie Galipeau

Young Albertine

Patrick Bergin

Walter Russell

Clotilde Courau

Rainee

John Cusack

Mapmaker

Jeanne Moreau

Sister Banville

Ben Mendelsohn

Farmboy

Jerry Snell

Boleslaw

Jayko Pitseolak

Avik's Grandmother

Matt Holland

Flight Navigator

Rebecca Vovee

Inuit Cook

Josape Kopalee

Inuit Elder

Keepah Arreak

Avik's Girlfriend

Monique Spaziani

Nurse Beatrice





**Hearts in winter: Robert Joamie, Annie Galipeau**

daughter's invitation to her wedding, he seizes the opportunity to whisk Albertine off into the skies, the image links not only with the other remarkable balloon encounter (when the daughter was probably conceived) but also with several further high-altitude assignations with Albertine, first encountered dropping missiles on young Avik from the hospital roof.

With frustrating honesty, the film refuses to end on this delirious reunion: instead, there is a familiar glimpse of young Albertine flashing a mirror as she retreats into darkness, a signal simultaneously representing attraction and inaccessibility. The sharing of reflected light has been a part of their relationship since they first met, emphasised in a scene between Albertine and Avik's rival, Walter Russell, who is unaffected by the light from her shattered hand-glass shining in his eyes. But Albertine's withdrawal also invites Avik to follow – as he has previously done, with some success (although this time he may be following her into a terminal shadow) – while at the same time suggesting that she is irrevocably lost to him.

Concluding, Avik's last moments dispense with Albertine as an enigma beyond solution, except that her song (also identified with her daughter) obstinately remains on the soundtrack. Intended as the device that would reunite the young Albertine with her lost father, the music now speaks for Avik; it is, Albertine once told us, about a half-breed who searches for gold and finds his true love in heaven. The accompanying image is of the child Avik bouncing in delighted slow-motion on a trampoline held by other members of his tribe, the moment at which Russell's plane first landed near the Inuit settlement and changed the boy's existence. "Every time Avik is thrown into the sky he brings down an aeroplane," jokes one of his Eskimo girlfriends, a remark which comments on the structure of the film itself, the Dresden episode included. As an ending, with the immutably juvenile Avik floating at both the close and the opening of his life as if perpetually recycled, it leaves Avik literally in suspension, unfulfilled as orphan, halfbreed, Eskimo, adult, lover, war veteran, or mapmaker. We are left with a vague sense of guilt for not knowing, and not

caring, more about him than we do.

Trimmed since it was first shown at Cannes in 1992, *Map of the Human Heart* charts such a broad expanse of years that Avik, while affably enough played by both Robert Joamie and Jason Scott Lee, has little chance of being exactly measured. Chunks of his life are unaccounted for, as though he only takes shape in proximity to Russell, his father-figure, and Albertine, outcast and playmate. Neither helps to fill in the blanks, because we don't have a clear picture of them either. Russell, played by Patrick Bergin in the coolly duplicitous manner he perfected for *Love Crimes*, is an intriguing but treacherous figure whose philanthropy soon gives way to malevolence. Albertine (a slightly disappointing Anne Parillaud) is split between loyalty to a childhood affection and her determination to break free of her half-caste origins and is denied the opportunity to prove herself by shaking Avik from his conviction that he is bad luck. She might have steered him to the cheerful compromise of a European lifestyle, but scenes in which she attempts a reunion after the war have now gone: Ward says it all with a superb cut from Albertine's burning X-ray at Dresden to the industrial flames reflected harmlessly on the polar snows.

Like Ward's other works, the film is an evocative visual epic open to many interpretations. His sequences are magnificently framed and seldom predictable, like the bizarre encounter with a ship that rescues Avik from his canoe while the passengers listen in frozen disregard to the tunes of a brass band; or the lavish ballroom scene at which Avik rediscovers Albertine and Russell and realises that it was he who brought them together. Russell's apartment, where he appears to be serious in approving the Dresden bombing as revenge on an old girlfriend, is suitably decorated with maps of all sizes, including a female figure shaped entirely from charts. If Ward's more outrageous venture is the love-making scene on top of a barrage balloon, his version of Dresden is a vivid and haunting inferno of panic and despair. What we learn about the human heart remains a matter of guesswork, but as a map the film certainly offers some eye-catching perspectives.

**Philip Strick**

## Matinee

USA 1993

Director: Joe Dante

### Certificate

PG

### Distributor

Guild

### Production Company

Universal

### Producer

Michael Finnell

### Co-producer

Pat Kehoe

### Production Associate

Betty Moos

### Production Co-ordinator

Dana Williams

### Unit Production Manager

Pat Kehoe

### Location Managers

Heather Farrington

Gaetano

Key West

Patricia Madiedo

### Cast

Gretchen Rennell

Florida:

Melvin Johnson

United Kingdom:

Simone Reynolds

### Assistant Directors

Donald P.H. Eaton

Cynthia A. Potthast

Molly M. Mayeux

### Screenplay

Charlie Haas

### Story

Jerico Haas

### Director of Photography

John Hora

### Colour

Deluxe

### Camera Operator

Bill Asman

### Steadicam Operator

John Corso

### Video Supervisor

Bob Morgenroth

### Visual Effects

Supervisor:

Dennis Michelson

Director of

Photography:

Bill Neil

### Mant/Ant Design

James McPherson

Ant Sculptor/Painter

Bruce S. Puller

### Mant Creatures

Brent Baker

Matt J. Britton

Chuck Crisafulli

Dorothy R. Duder

Johnnie Salco Espiritu

Jose Fernandez

Jurgen Heimann

Camilla Henneman

Mike Jolley

J.M. Kenny

Carolyn Oros

Sally Ray

Brandon Seifert

Heidi Snyder

Bill Sturgeon

### Cave Painting Animation

Mauro Maressa

### Mant Electricity Animation

Fantasy II

### Editor

Marshall Harvey

### Production Designer

Steven Legler

### Art Director

Nanci B. Roberts

### Set Design

Stephen Alesch

### Set Decorators

Frederick C. Weiler

Eric Weiler

### Production Illustrator

Barbara Anne Bock

### Scenic Artist

Amy Parsons

### Miniatures

Stetson Visual Services:

Supervisors:

Robert Spurlack

Mark Stetson

Chief Modelmaker:

Ian Hunter

Mechanical Designer:

Tom Quinn

Pyrotechnic

Supervisor:

Tom Viskocil

Tom Griep

Scott Schneider

Production

Co-ordinators:

Michael Chambers

Laura Levy

### Music

Jerry Goldsmith

### Orchestrations

Alexander Courage

### Music Editor

Kenneth Hall

### Songs

"The Lion Sleeps

Tonight" by Hugh

Peretti, Albert Stanton,

George Weiss, Luigi

Creatore, based on

a song by Solomon

Linda, Paul Campbell,

performed by The

Tokens; "Walk, Don't

Run" by Johnny A.

Smith, performed

by The Challengers;

"My Boyfriend's Back"

by Robert Feldman,

Gerald Goldstein,

Richard Gottreher,

performed by The

Angels; "Johnny Angel"

by Lee Pockriss, Lyn

Duddy, performed

by Shelly Fabares;

"Loco-Motion" by Gerry

Goffin, Carole King,

performed by Little

Eva; "The Man Who

Shot Liberty Valance"

by Burt Bacharach,

Hal David, Gene Pitney,

performed by Gene

Pitney; "The End of the

World" by Sylvia Dee,

Arthur Kent,

performed by Skeeter

Davis; "The Great

Pretender" by Buck

Ram, performed by

The Platters

### Costume Design

Isis Mussenden

### Wardrobe Supervisor

M.A. Worobec

### Make-up

Key:

Rodger Jacobs

Selena Evans Miller

### Title Design

R/Greenberg Associates

### Opticals

Pacific Titles

### Supervising Sound Editors

Mark Mangini

George Simpson

### Sound Editors

David A. Whittaker

Warren Hamilton

Julia Evershade

### ADR Editor

Curt Shulkey

### Foley Editors

John J. Carr

Rick Mitchell

### Sound Recordists

Howard Warren

Albert Romero

### Music:

Bruce Botnick

Foley:

Sandra Garcia

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Rick Alexander

Jim Bolt

Andy D'Addario

ADR:

Doc Kane

Foley:

Marilyn Graff

### Sound Transfers

Dave Moreno

### Sound Effects

John P.

### Foley Artists

Ellen Heuer

Joan Rowe

### Military Adviser

Colonel George

E. Palmer

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Smolek

### Stunts

Greg Anderson

Janet Elder

Steve Hart

Debbie Kahana

Kim Kahana

Larry Nicholas

Felipe Savahge

Brewster Sears

Kimberly Turvey

Tommy Turvey

Amy Wilder

Danny J. Yates

Joshua Zolin

### Cast

John Goodman

Lawrence Woolsey

Cathy Moriarty

Ruth Corday/Carole

Simon Fenton

Gene Loomis

Omri Katz

Stan

Lisa Jakub

Sandra

Kellie Martin

Sherry

Jesse Lee

Dennis Loomis

Lucinda Jenney

Anne Loomis

James Villeneuve

Harvey Starkweather

Robert Picardo

Howard, the Theatre

Manager

Jesse White

Mr Spector

Dick Miller

Herb

John Sayles

Bob

David Crennon

Jack

Lucy Butler

Rhonda

Georgie Cranford

Dwight

Nick Bronson

Andy

Cory Barlog

George Carson

Joe Gonzalez

Stan's Friends

Belinda Balaski

Stan's Mom

Charlie Haas

Mr Elroy

Mark McCracken

Mant/Bill

Archie Hahn



◀ invites Stan on a date, but Stan is warned off by her delinquent ex-boyfriend Harvey. Meeting Woolsey, Gene is taken on to help set up shock gimmicks in the cinema. Woolsey also recruits Harvey to rampage through the audience got up as the man-ant monster, and to operate special effects (including the earthquake-simulating Rumblerama). Howard, the manager, already paranoid about nuclear war, worries about the fabric of his cinema, but Woolsey ignores him.

The Saturday matinee premiere of *Mant*: Woolsey has invited a potential backer, Mr Spector of Megalopolitan Theaters. Gene arrives with Dennis and Stan, meeting Sandra in the foyer. Sherry shows up, still annoyed with Stan, but Gene reconciles them. Harvey, rampaging in his Mant suit, sees Sherry and Stan kissing, and attacks Stan. During the subsequent chase Gene and Sandra get shut in Howard's bomb shelter, while Harvey knocks Stan out and abducts Sherry. While Woolsey breaks into the shelter to rescue Gene and Sandra, the Rumblerama gets out of control, loosening the cinema's balcony. Woolsey springs his final gimmick, a faked nuclear attack, and the audience flee in panic. Gene rescues Dennis as the balcony collapses. Harvey is arrested and Sherry and Stan are reunited. A delighted Spector offers Woolsey a fat contract. With the Cuban crisis over, Gene and Sandra stroll along the beach to watch the returning US forces.

● "Takes a lot more to scare people these days," observes John Goodman as cigar-chomping schlockmeister Lawrence Woolsey. It sure does, and *Matinee* invites us to chuckle indulgently at the innocent days of the nascent 60s, when people could get seriously alarmed by actors in rubber monster suits, scuzzy gimmicks like seat-buzzers, and even - ho, ho - the Cuban missile crisis. The film also allows Dante to pay affectionate homage to William Castle, the gimmick-fiend of B-horror whose production values made Roger Corman look

profligate - and to toss in a wicked pastiche of a Disney family comedy (*The Shook-Up Shopping Cart*), all bozo humour and slapdash slapstick.

Dante can always be relied on for some good gags, visual and verbal, and plenty of movie-buff references - to his own films as well as to other people's. *Matinee* replays the rioting teenage movie audience from *Gremlins*, this time with live actors, as well as trumping the burning-through-the-film trick from *Gremlins 2*. *Mant* itself, of which we get to see several generous chunks, is spot-on parody, with crummy sets, cloth-ear dialogue ("I keep asking myself - why, why?") and every cliché set-up in the book: in one delirious excerpt a mob of vengeful peasants, complete with pitchforks, surges through modern-day Chicago streets.

All the performances are well-gauged (including those in *Mant*, which are bad in just the right way), with an enjoyable double act from John Sayles and Dick Miller as the phoney moral crusaders. Goodman plays Woolsey with massive relish, lacking hard-bitten cynicism with flashes of child-like delight at his own powers of manipulation. And under all the gags, Dante makes some shrewd points about our propensity to divert from real terrors into fake ones until we wind up unable to tell the difference.

Yet the whole mixture doesn't quite gel. *Matinee* is never as uproariously funny, or as unsettling, as it should be. Partly it's a matter of period tone - the Cuban crisis provides a neat analogue, but at the expense of skewing the social attitudes, which feel more mid-50s than early 60s. More crucially, Dante seems ultimately unwilling to go for the jugular: the film never fixes the panic-stricken rictus behind atom-age America's brittle facade the way Bob Balaban's *Parents* did, or Eugene Corr's underrated *Desert Bloom*. Ironically, some of those same B-horror that Dante sends up - *Them!*, for example, or *The Incredible Shrinking Man* - have retrospectively acquired the very resonance that *Matinee* fails to achieve.

Philip Kemp



Creature feature: Cathy Moriarty

## National Lampoon's Loaded Weapon 1

USA 1993

Director: Gene Quintano

### Certificate

PG

### Distributor

Guild

### Production Company

New Line Cinema

### Executive Producers

Michel Roy

Howard Klein

Erwin Stoff

### Co-Executive Producer

Michael DeLuca

### Producers

Suzanne Todd

David Willis

### Executive in Charge of Production

Cindy Hornickel

### National Lampoon Executive

James P. Jimirro

### Production Supervisor

Cindy Litman

### Production Controller

Paul Prokop

### Production Co-ordinator

Bonnie Macker

### Unit Production Manager

William Carroll

### Location Manager

Toni Maier

### Executive in Charge of Post-production

Joe Fineman

### Post-production Supervisor

Pam Winn

### 2nd Unit Director

Charles Picerni

### Casting

Ferne Cassel

### Assistant Directors

Ken Goch

David Womark

Robert D. Nellans

Daniel M. Stillman

Hilbert Hakim

Robert Leveen

### Screenplay

Don Holley

Gene Quintano

### Story

Don Holley

Tori Tellem

### Director of Photography

Peter Dening

### Colour

Deluxe

prints by

Film House

### Camera Operators

Peter Deming

B Camera:

Paul Hughen

### Steadicam Operator

Kirk R. Gardner

### Editor

Christopher Greenbury

### Production Designer

Jaymes Hinkle

### Art Director

Alan E. Muraoka

### Set Decorator

Sarah B. Stone

### Set Dressers

Blaise Delacroix

Julie Sexsmith

### Scenic Artist

Charli Palazzo

### Storyboard Artists

Chris Buchinsky

David Russell

### Special Effects Foremen

Jim Doyle

Richard L. Thompson

### Special Effects

Josh Hakian

Randy Lee Tarum

Anthony W. Simonaitis

Morgan Guynes

John Carlucci

Robert Ahmanson

Dean W. Miller

Chuck Schmitz

Jon Jenkins

James A. Ochoa

### Music

Robert Folk

### Music Supervisor

Dawn Soler

### Music Editor

Douglas M. Lackey

### Songs

"You Really Got Me"

by Ray Davies,

performed by Denis

Leary, Marty Blaskick;

"We Can Work It Out"

by John Lennon, Paul

McCartney; "I'm

Popeye The Sailorman"

by Sammy Lerner;

"Love Kills" by Freddie

Mercury, Giorgio

Moroder, performed

by Freddie Mercury;

"Bohemian Rhapsody"

performed by Queen

### Costume Design

Jacki Arthur

### Wardrobe

Victoria DeKay

### Make-up Artists

Key:

Jeanne Van Phue

Michael Germain

Cheryl Nick

Katharina

Hirsch-Smith

### Make-up Effects

David Miller

Peggy O'Brien

### Special Effects Make-up

David LeRoy Anderson

### Titles/Opticals

Howard A. Anderson

### Supervising Sound Editor

Bob Newlan

### Dialogue Editors

Duncan Burns

Harry B. Miller III

### ADR Supervisor

Lily Diamond

### ADR Editor

Donald Sylvester

### Foley Editors

Mark Pappas

Douglas Kent

### Sound Recordists

Marty Bolger

John Coffey

### Music:

Steve Sykes

Waster Gest

Greg Gest

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Thom Ehle

### Sound Re-recordists

Wayne Heitman

Jeffrey J. Haboush

Mark Smith

### Sound Effects Editors

John Edwards-Youner

John Joseph Thomas

Hamilton Sterling

John Kwitkowski

Steven J. Schwalbe

### Foley Artist

Edward Steidle

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Charles Picerni

### Stunts

Bob Arnold

Greg Barnett

Kenny Bates

Tom Bruggeman

Lou Carlucci

Danny Castle

Jimmy Connors

George Fisher

Norman Howell

Eric Mansker

Michael V. Marasco

Alan Oliney

Victor Paul

Manny Perry

Charles Picerni

Chuck Picerni Jr

Paul Picerni

Steve Picerni

Berni Pock

R. A. Rondell

Phillip Tan

William Washington

Nancy Young

### Helicopter Pilots

Chris Joachim

Gary Suozzi

### Cast

Emilio Estevez

Jack Colt

Samuel L. Jackson

Wes Luger

Jon Lovitz

Becker

Tim Curry

Jigsaw

Kathy Ireland

Destiny Demeanor

Frank McRae

Captain Doyle

William Shatner

General Mortars

Dhiru Shah

Translator

Gokul

Hindu

Tom Bruggeman

Danny Castle

Mini-Kin Punks

Lance Kinsey

Irv

Bill Nunn

Police Photographer

Doctor Joyce Brothers

Coroner

Lin Shaye

Witness

Robert Willis

Armanied Cop

Vito Scotti

Tailor

### Ken Ober

Dooley

James Doohan

Scotty

Lauren Abels

Police Psychiatrist

Richard Moll

Prison Attendant

F. Murray Abraham

Doctor Leacher

Charlie Sheen

Valet

Denis Leary

Mike McCracken

Denise Lee Richards

Mary Lynn Naggie

Suzie Hardy

Karman Kruschke

Cindys

Michael Castner

As Himself

J.P. Hubbell

Megaphone Cop

Corey Feldman

Young Cop

Phil Hartman

Comic Cop

J. T. Walsh

Desk Clerk

Erik Estrada

As Himself

Larry Wilcox

As Himself

Paul Gleason

FBI Agent

Jake Johannsen

Drug Dealer



on, he begs for mercy. By the time Colt and Luger arrive, the place is strewn with corpses.

The pair decide to tackle the Wilderness Girls corporate HQ where they are met by a Ms Demeanor. The attraction between her and Colt leads her to agree to help them. On removing her glasses, she transforms from frump to vamp before agreeing to a downtown interrogation. A gallery full of officers leer while she swivels in her chair, giving coy answers until she is replaced by a toy beaver. Colt and Destiny Demeanor are attacked by helicopters while enjoying Colt's palatial motor home and comparing wounds. Colt and Luger raid the cookie warehouse, eliminate the bad guys and find that they had Colt's dog captive all along. They end by singing 'Bohemian Rhapsody' in their car.

The long line of spoofs going back to *Airplane* and including *Police Squad* and its *Naked Gun* spin-offs are traditionally aimed at soft targets: '70s disaster movies, routine cop thrillers - whatever packs enough clichés to be lampooned without the writers being over-clever, and yet takes itself seriously enough to warrant pants-down subversion. While no-one would deny the conventional content of the *Lethal Weapon* movies, they are nevertheless a much tougher prospect for spoofing because they throw up a conundrum: how do you parody the already parodic?

Preferring to build the Murtagh and Riggs characters (Danny Glover and Mel Gibson) into a deadpan, likeable pair who send themselves up all the time, the *Lethal Weapon* team pride themselves on never taking cop action too seriously. In this they are merely following the Schwarzenegger action movie trend of heroes with a bulge in one cheek. *Loaded Weapon 1* adds an extra pair of inverted commas, but can it bear the weight?

That the *National Lampoon* team are unsure of this is shown by their willingness to embrace a different sort of spoof territory altogether, that of *Wayne's World*. Abounding with sight gags about teen-directed supermarket products, *Loaded Weapon 1* mirrors Wayne and Garth's deliberately dumber-than-dumb attitude to cinema - i.e. that it's about babes, big guns and Bond villains (preferably played by *Star Trek* survivors). In this vision, the film's lame parodies - of the 'chianti and fava beans' scene from *The Silence of the Lambs*, of Sharon Stone's interrogation and Michael Douglas' 'butt in a moonbeam' walk from *Basic Instinct* - take second place to the intimate disposable signifiers of suburban teen America. This makes *Loaded Weapon 1* much less sparky, disruptive and anarchic than its predecessors. What's missing is the underlying fear of chaos evoked by Leslie Nielsen's slapstick cop in the *Naked Gun* series. However loaded the TV teen references, by comparison Colt and Luger seem underarmed and overdressed.

Nick James

## Nowhere To Run

USA 1992

Director: Robert Harmon

Certificate  
15

**Distributor**  
Columbia TriStar  
**Production Company**  
Columbia Pictures  
**Executive Producer**  
Michael Rachmil  
**Producers**  
Craig Baumgarten  
Gary Adelson  
**Associate Producer**  
Eugene Van Varenberg  
**Production Co-ordinator**  
Susan Dukow  
**Unit Production Manager**  
Tony Mark  
**Location Manager**  
Jim Maceo  
**2nd Unit Director**  
Peter Macdonald  
**Casting**  
Jackie Burch  
**Assistant Directors**  
Brian W. Cook  
Carl Goldstein  
David Spitzer  
**2nd Unit:**  
David C. Anderson  
Mathew Dunne  
David A. Ticotin  
**Screenplay**  
Joe Eszterhas  
Leslie Bohem  
Randy Feldman  
**Story**  
Joe Eszterhas  
Richard Marquand  
**Director of Photography**  
David Gribble  
**Colour**  
Technicolor  
**2nd Unit Directors of Photography**  
Douglas Milsome  
Michael A. Benson  
**Camera Operators**  
Michael St Hilaire  
Samuel Buddy Fries  
**2nd Unit:**  
Joseph F. Valentine  
David Rudd  
**Steadicam Operator**  
Michael G. Meinardus  
**Editors**  
Zack Staenberg  
Mark Helfrich  
**Production Designer**  
Dennis Washington  
**Art Director**  
Joseph P. Lucky  
**Set Design**  
Richard McKenzie  
**Set Decorator**  
Anne D. McCulley  
**Storyboard Artist**  
David Russell  
**Special Effects Supervisor**  
Jeff Jarvis  
**Music**  
Mark Isham  
**Music Editor**  
Michael Connell  
**Songs**  
"When My Ship Comes In" by Clint Black, Hayden Nicholas, performed by Clint Black; "After All", "The Doubt" by and performed by Charlie Mitchell; "Silence is Broken" by Ted Nugent, Tommy Shaw, Jack Blades, performed by Damn Yankees  
**Costume Design**  
Gamila Mariana  
Fahkry  
**Wardrobe**  
Supervisor:  
Linda Serijan-Fasmer  
Kelly Lindquist  
**Make-up**  
Zoltan Elek  
**Titles/Opticals**  
Cinema Research Corporation

**Supervising Sound Editors**

Fred J. Brown  
Michele Sharp  
**Sound Editors**  
Stan Siegel  
Martin Dreffke  
Frank Jimenez  
**Supervising ADR Editor**  
David B. Cohn  
**ADR Editor**  
Linda Folk  
**Sound Recordist**  
David Kirschner  
Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recordists**  
Gregory H. Watkins  
John J. Stephens  
Aaron Rochin  
**Foley**  
Jackson Schwartz  
**Technical Advisor**  
Daniel A. Inosanto  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
Billy Burton  
**Stunts**  
Chris Branham  
Bobby Burns  
Heather Burton  
William H. Burton Jr  
Richard E. Butler  
Richard Epper  
Dane Farwell  
Randy Hall  
Clifford Happy  
John Hateley  
Thomas V. Huff  
Henry Kingi  
Clint Lilley  
Gary McLarty  
Benny Moore  
Larry Nicholas  
Dennis Ray Scott  
Mark Stefanich  
William Washington  
Mike Watson

**Cast**

Jean-Claude Van Damme  
Sam  
Rosanna Arquette  
Clydie  
Kieran Culkin  
Mookie  
Ted Levine  
Mr Dunston  
Tiffany Taubman  
Bree  
Edward Blatchford  
Lonnie  
Anthony Starke  
Billy  
Joss Ackland  
Franklin Hale  
Allen Graf  
Bus Driver  
Leonard Termo  
Bus Guard  
Robert Aprisa  
Jophery Brown  
Tony Brubaker  
Ron Howard George  
Voyo Gorale  
Jack Lucarelli  
Peter Malota  
Frank Orsatti  
Manny Perry  
Thomas Rosales  
Ron Stein  
Sven-Ole Thorsen  
Jack Verbois  
Chuck Zito  
Prisoners  
James Greene  
Country Store Clerk  
Steve Chambers  
Pick-Up Truck Thug  
Stephen Wesley  
Bridgewater  
Tom Lewis  
Christy Botkin  
Sarah Lewis  
Luana Anders  
Town Meeting  
Chairwoman  
Kevin Page  
Albie Selznick  
Hales' Associates

Andy Gille  
Jack Gill  
Gene LeBell  
Jeff Ramsey  
Randall Widner  
Bulldozer Men  
Gavin Glennon  
Auto Parts Clerk  
John Rubinow  
Clydie's Husband  
Stanley White  
Cop in Diner

Joseph Menza  
Diner Cook  
John Finn  
Cop in Chase  
John Kerry  
Big Thug "John"  
Tony Epper  
Fire Thug "Al"  
  
8,498 feet  
94 minutes

Sam, a convict, is rescued from a prison transport vehicle by his former partner-in-crime Billy, who is fatally wounded in the escape. While hiding out in the woods, Sam is drawn to a local family consisting of two children, Bree and Mookie, and their widowed mother Clydie. They are being harassed by property developer Franklin Hale, who wants to buy Clydie's house and land. Sam saves her and the children from some hired thugs. In return, she invites him to stay in her barn. When her nosey occasional boyfriend Lonnie, the local sheriff, discovers Sam, Clydie introduces him as her Quebecois cousin. Hale and his henchman Dunston redouble their efforts to drive off Clydie's neighbours by setting fire to their barn, but Sam manages to save both the horses and the neighbour's life.

Sam's bond with the family grows, especially with Mookie, who misses his father. Clydie tends Sam's wounds after he has been handcuffed and beaten by the jealous Lonnie, who is secretly in Hale's pay. Recognizing a kindred sense of loneliness, Clydie and Sam make love. However, after she discovers his true identity, Clydie sends Sam away, fearing he will bring her family more trouble. Camping out alone once again, Sam is besieged by hundreds of law enforcement officers, but manages to elude them on his motorbike. He returns to Clydie in time to save her from Hale and Dunston, who intend to burn her house down. After quelling these enemies with Mookie's assistance, Sam surrenders to the police posse which has tracked him down, vowing to return someday to Clydie and the children.

*Nowhere to Run* opens like the beginning of Walter Hill's *48 Hours*, with a fugitive fleeing a chain gang, a graceful bout of stunt driving, and a brief ballet of fisticuffs. Neatly assembled, if a little perfunctory, this opening sequence has all the standard action-thriller trademarks: cars, guns and jokey one-liners. It forms a little bridge between Jean-Claude Van Damme's previous films, all-macho kick-and-shoot flicks, and his new three-picture package with Columbia, of which this is the first, designed to launch him into the mainstream by softening his image. Thereafter, apart from a few strategically placed fight and chase sequences, the dominant tone is sentimental, the main locus of action domestic and pastoral. The outlaw is tamed by the love of a good woman, whose home and way of life are threatened by the forces of modernity. Despite the modern day setting, *Nowhere to Run* is a fair-to-middling old-

fashioned Western at heart, complete with burning barns, evil hired guns, fatherless children and a pretty widow. The story is especially reminiscent of *Shane*, particularly in its handling of the relationship between the boy Mookie, played by Macaulay Culkin's elfish younger brother Kieran, and Sam the hardened convict. Even the picture of Van Damme chosen for the poster - stubble-chinned, furrow-browed, sandy-complexioned - recalls Alan Ladd.

Van Damme's epicene beauty and gamine quality set him apart from his action man coevals. He's prettier and slighter than Schwarzenegger, less grim than Seagal, more humane than Lundgren or Norris. His persistent Francophone accent, which each of his scripts must accommodate somehow (this time he's meant to be from Quebec), overlays a rakish charm on his slightly vulnerable persona. He seems to be more popular with discriminating female action fans, perhaps due to his physique's callipygous rear view, exploited in *Nowhere to Run* no less than in his previous films' nude scenes. The attempt to draw in female audiences is further underlined when an early scene of Van Damme reading a porn mag called *Top Heavy* is balanced by joking references to his accidentally revealed penis (Bree thinks it's big, while Clydie describes it as 'average'). Objectification works both ways in the post-feminist action film.

While Van Damme acts more competently than expected, Rosanna Arquette's performance is disappointing, probably less through her own fault than the director's and the screenwriters'. Every time she sucks nervously on a cigarette, previous roles of brittle, more interesting sophisticates are conjured in the smoke. Even in moments of supposedly domestic bliss, she seems chafed by the earth-mother act. One wonders why she isn't selling up, ditching the kids, and moving to Venice Beach to sell crystals and star-fuck. The child actors themselves don't really help things. Tiffany Taubman as Bree is standard issue poppet, while Culkin overacts and lacks the naturalness that is his brother's strongest suit. Joss Ackland and Ted Levine, however, as the baddies, give fine, lip-smacking, moustache-twirling performances.

Although the script distributes its plot devices efficiently enough, judging by the banality of the dialogue, one wonders why Joe Eszterhas commands such a reputation. Robert Harmon, of *The Hitcher*, directs fights and chases fairly well, and paces things nicely, providing a few camera tricks and plenty of close-ups of Van Damme to meet studio specifications, but is less sure at handling actors. *Nowhere to Run* has failed so far to launch Van Damme into the major star orbit, possibly because it doesn't allow him to do enough of what he does best, apart from being pretty, and that's karate. In fact, the only one to do any kickboxing in the whole film is the horse.

Leslie Felperin Sharman



# Les Nuits fauves (Savage Nights)

France 1992

Director: Cyril Collard

## Certificate

18  
**Distributor**  
Artificial Eye  
**Production Companies**  
Banfilm Ter/  
La Sept Cinéma/  
Erre Produzioni/SNC  
With the participation  
of Sofinergie 2/CNC/  
Canal Plus/Procrep  
**Executive Producer**  
Jean-Frédéric Samie

## Costume Design

Régine Arnaud  
**Make-up**  
Hertz Nativ  
**Sound Editors**  
Patrice Grisolet  
Frédéric Attal  
**Sound Recordist**  
Michel Brethez  
**Sound Re-recordist**  
Dominique Hennequin  
Dolby stereo

## Cast

**Cyril Collard**  
Jean  
**Romane Dohringer**  
Laura  
**Carlos Lopez**  
Samy  
**Corine Blue**  
Laura's Mother  
**Claude Winter**  
Jean's mother  
**René-Marc Bini**  
Marc  
**Maria Schneider**  
Noria  
**Clémentine Célarie**  
Marianne  
**Laura Favali**  
Karine  
**Denis D'Archangelo**  
Singer  
**Jean-Jacques Jauffret**  
Pierre Ollivier  
**Aissa Jabri**  
Kader  
**Francisco Gimenez**  
Paco  
**Marine Deltorme**  
Sylvie  
**Yannick Tollia**  
Nurse  
**Olivier Pajot**  
Lempereur  
**Diego Porres**  
Jaime  
**Stephan Lakatos**  
Jipe  
**Christophe Chantre**  
Martial  
**Michel Voletti**  
Mr André  
**Régine Arnaud**  
Véro  
**Anna Lopez Villanua**  
Samy's Mother  
**Olivier Chavaret**  
Olivier  
**Samir Guesmi**  
Jamel  
**Claudio Zaccari**  
Doctor  
**Dominique Figaro**  
Camille  
**Rosa Castro**  
Housekeeper  
**Nella Banfi**  
Manager  
**Olivia Reynaud**  
Laura's Friend  
**11,340 feet**  
**126 minutes**  
**Subtitles**

In 1986, Jean, a photographer, goes on a working trip to Morocco. Back in Paris, he discovers that he has contracted the HIV virus. While making a commercial, he meets Laura, an 18-year-old who has come to audition. They are attracted to each other, but Jean is also involved with a wild young man, Samy. Having seduced Samy, Jean finds himself torn between Laura, Samy and covert gay cruising episodes. After Jean and Laura

have sex without using any protection, Jean is too ashamed to confess to her. When he finally admits his HIV status, she is angry that he did not tell her the truth. She is also jealous of his relationship with Samy. When Laura decides to go away for a while, Samy moves in with Jean. Although he comes from a Spanish immigrant family, he is increasingly drawn to a group of fascist thugs, as well as ritualised S/M.

Jean starts AZT treatment. When Laura returns, she is angry that Samy is living with Jean. Jean visits his parents and confides in his mother, who tells him that the virus may teach him how to love. On his way home, speeding in his car, he is involved in a crash but is unhurt. He decides to stop seeing Laura but she telephones him constantly, hurling abuse at him. When she claims that she has caught the HIV virus, he goes to see her. After a struggle, she is taken to a residential clinic, where a test reveals that she does not have the virus. When Jean next sees her, she has a new boyfriend and does not wish to go back to him. Jean discovers that Samy has become involved with a fascist gang and one night finds him beating up an Arab. Jean holds the gang to ransom by threatening them with his infected blood. He writes to Laura, saying that he is not ready to settle down, then journeys to the desert where he seems to find peace.

This was a personal project for Cyril Collard, who not only directed and starred in the film but also wrote the original novel. And although neither are autobiographical, they are based in certain realities, not least Collard's seropositivity - he was apparently one of the first well-known people in France to talk openly about his HIV status. Collard did his film apprenticeship with director Maurice Pialat, and it shows in his loud, jagged, often quasi-documentary style. In keeping with the speedy frenzy that guides Jean, *Les Nuits fauves* appears to be shot largely with hand-held cameras that fuzz and blur urgently between images and jerkily rhythmic cuts. Jean's world is defined either by the deep, bright colours of his apartment, which overlooks a glowing Paris, or by the dark cruising alleys by the Seine, where only his face is visible as he enfolds himself in masculine bodies.

Much of the dialogue has an emotional, improvised feel, which works brilliantly in scenes such as Jean's hesitating confession to Laura that he is HIV positive, or the couple's first kiss. The *vérité* effect is alternated with high drama - Laura's descent into hysteria; Samy's grimacing preoccupations with self-mutilation; the attack on the Arab boy. And the whole is polished off with tangential, semi-documentary forays: a drunken, singing drag queen in a bar, who takes on the role of Greek chorus; or the touchingly innocent Spanish song and dance evenings with Samy's family.

The clashing styles fit together with extraordinary ease, only adding to the

sense of frenzy that drives the three mixed-up characters. Of these, Laura is probably the least prepossessing because she falls so squarely into the cliché of the coltish, spoiled and sadly mad French heroine. As soon as she starts shrieking, irritating echoes of Betty Blue or Nikita sound. But at least this gamine manages to redeem herself; and at least her anger in her *amour fou* is seen as in some way justified. Samy, too, is drawn in broad strokes as the naive, but crudely ambitious boy toy. But if the film draws a curious blank over his response to the homosexual implications of his relationship with Jean, he is given moments of emotion and bewilderment that make him painfully real.

What is remarkable about Collard's performance is the way he transforms a number of male clichés into a credible, even sympathetic character. Jean's penchant for speeding cars, his fast and loose life, professional success, constant hunger for new sensations, sexiness and huge charm are all treated with a hint of irony. When Jean leaps into his car, the deftly edited driving scenes have a studio-bound hyper-reality that seems to mock a little. The differences between his two relationships also serve to put him into context: if Laura adores him, Samy is using him. And his own relationship with his changing body makes him increasingly complex. His final discovery that he is 'in life' may seem twee but it is, in its way, surprisingly potent. What makes it so is the element that changes the nature of the changes Jean desires - the HIV virus.

Although it is hard to write about the film without emphasising the importance of the virus to it, *Savage Nights* does just that, without diminishing its importance - and certainly without the usual heavy-handed symbolism. Instead of trying to make meaning of the virus, the film looks sideways at its connection with Jean's own sense of denial and acceptance; the move from his initial impulse, even once he has the virus, that nothing will happen to him. What is important about the final scene is that it links HIV with life rather than death. Unlike Laura's tantrums or Samy's grim self-destruction, it touches on how something positive can come from suffering, while refraining from the idea that sick people have recourse only to spiritualism.

The intentional rough edges, speedy camera and quick-fire editing give *Les Nuits fauves* a lightness of touch that allows it to slip deftly over its 'big' themes, and even to push through heavy-handed moments like Jean's infected-blood ransom. The film's style also gives the impression that it's catching the characters off-guard, fleshing them out to hint at the gap between how the threesome see themselves and how others see them. If it opts for a moral mode, making them all learn something, it does so with stunning visual flair that translates itself easily into emotional sympathy.

Amanda Lipman

# Passenger 57

USA 1992

Director: Kevin Hooks

## Certificate

15  
**Distributor**  
Warner Bros  
**Production Company**  
Warner Bros  
**Executive Producer**  
Jonathan Sheinberg  
**Producers**  
Lee Rich  
Dan Paulson  
Dylan Sellers  
**Co-producer/Unit**  
Production Manager  
Robert J. Anderson  
**Location Manager**  
Brian Albertsman

## Casting

Shari Rhodes  
**Assistant Directors**  
Gary Marcus  
John E. Gallagher  
Cyd Adams  
Michael Finn  
Parnes Cartwright  
**Screenplay**  
David Loughery  
Dan Gordon  
**Story**  
Stewart Raffill  
Dan Gordon  
**Director of Photography**  
Mark Irwin

## Colour

Technicolor  
**Camera Operator**  
Frank Miller  
**Steadicam Operator**  
Bob Ulland  
**Editor**  
Richard Nord  
**Associate Editor**  
Joe Gutowski  
**Production Designer**  
Jaymes Hinkle  
**Art Director**  
Alan Muraoka  
**Set Decorator**  
Don K. Ivey  
**Set Dresser**  
Ed Collins  
**Special Effects**  
William Purcell  
**Music**  
Stanley Clarke  
**Orchestrations**  
William Kidd  
Stanley Clarke  
Jeff Marsh  
**Music Editors**  
Jamie Gelb Forester  
Lise Richardson  
Jim Young

## Song

"Too High" by Stevie Wonder, performed by Norman Brown  
**Costume Design**  
Brad Loman  
**Costume Supervisor**  
Mary Lou Byrd  
**Costumers**  
Barnaby Smith  
Shirley Bird  
Kathryn Bird  
**Make-up**  
Key:  
Selena Evans-Miller  
Artists:  
Leslie Christin  
Julie Hill-Parker  
**Title Design**  
R/Greenberg Associates  
**Supervising Sound Editor**  
Robert G. Henderson  
**ADR Editors**  
William C. Carruth  
Dick Friedman  
**Foley Editors**  
Solange  
Schwalbe-Boisseau  
Christopher Flick  
Scot Tinsley  
**Sound Recordists**  
Robert Anderson Jnr  
Music:  
Dan Humann  
Bobby Fernandez

## Foley Recordist

Eric Gottbealf  
Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recordists**  
Wayne Artman  
Frank Jones  
Tom Dahl  
**Sound Effects Editors**  
David M. Horton  
Virginia Cook  
McGowan  
Greg Dillon  
Samuel C. Crutcher  
James J. Isaacs  
**Foley Artists**  
Sarah Jacobs  
Robin Harlan  
**Technical Advisers**  
Marcus Salgado  
Dave Black  
**Stunt Co-ordinators**  
Glenn Wilder  
Jeff Ward  
**Stunts**  
Scotty Coyote  
Eric Whitmore  
Kathy Marshall  
Mark Chadwick  
Ronald C. Ross  
Anderson Martin  
Artie Malesci  
Brady Michaels  
Gar Stephen  
Steven T. Ritz  
Chick Bernhart  
Sharie Doolittle  
John Zimmerman  
John Evanko  
Joseph Murphy  
Greg Anderson  
Mike Christopher  
Erich Barrett  
Barry Brazell  
Thomas J. McTague  
William Orsini  
Thomas R. Akos  
Kim Kahana  
Ron Norris  
Jeff Moldovan  
Mindy Branton  
Lisa Jean Renzetti  
Natalie B. Boillinger  
Kim Zimmerman  
Max Daniels  
Cheyenne Rivera  
Brandy Johnson  
Kelly Erin Welton  
Bill Sharp  
Perry Barndt  
Lex Geddings

## Cast

**Wesley Snipes**  
John Cutter  
**Bruce Payne**  
Charles Kane  
**Tom Sizemore**  
Sly Delvecchio  
**Alex Datcher**  
Marti Slayton  
**Bruce Greenwood**  
Stuart Ramsey  
**Robert Hooks**  
Dwight Henderson  
**Elizabeth Hurley**  
Sabrina Ritchie  
**Michael Horse**  
Forget  
**Marc Macaulay**  
Vincent  
**Ernie Lively**  
Chief Biggs  
**Duchess Tomasello**  
Mrs Edwards  
**Cameron Roberts**  
Matthew  
**James Short**  
Allen  
**Joel Fogel**  
Doctor Bauman  
**Jane McPherson**  
Nurse  
**Winston Bedford**  
Doctor  
**Lori Bedford**  
Surgical Receptionist  
**Kent Lindsey**  
Agent Claflin



**Rand MacPherson**  
SWAT Commander  
**Lou Bedford**  
Attorney Phillips  
**Elena Ayala**  
Lisa Cutter  
**Mike Speller**  
Headwaiter  
**Kareem Germain**  
Security Attendant  
**Michael Moss**  
Agent Manning  
**Jim McDonald**  
Agent Duncan  
**Zachary McLemore**  
Norman  
**Less Thurman**  
Norman's Mother  
**Janet Elder**  
Screaming Woman  
**Alicia Allred**  
Flight Attendant  
**Frank Causey**  
Captain Whitehurst  
**Marty Connell**  
First Officer  
**Frank Hart**  
Flight Engineer  
**Tom Nowicki**  
Sly's Assistant

**Linda Vick**  
Receptionist  
**Robert Midden**  
Pistol-whipped  
Passenger  
**Dennis Letts**  
Frank Allen  
**Janis Benson**  
Nora Allen  
**Gary Rorman**  
Douglas  
**Lindsey Diamond**  
Hostage Woman  
**Dean Carlberg**  
Helicopter Pilot  
**James Brett Rice**  
James Stone  
**James Stone**  
Cops  
**Henry J. McGauley**  
Store Hold-up Man  
**Michael D. Conner**  
FBI Agent  
**Carl Cole**  
Sharpshooter  
**Jack Gibson**  
**Lisa Capriani**  
Reporters

**7,519 feet**  
**84 minutes**

About to have plastic surgery, universally feared English terrorist Charles Rane senses danger, and breaks out of the operating theatre just as a SWAT team pounces. After a violent struggle and chase, they apprehend him. On an airplane flight deck, a passenger holds stewardess Marti Slayton at gunpoint, but she disarms him. It is a training exercise, and the man – airline security adviser John Cutter – upbraids her for risking her life. His vehemence is explained by her resemblance to his wife, killed in a robbery when Cutter tried to intervene. Still not recovered from this shock, he is in semi-retirement from his real work as a leading anti-terrorist operative.

Cutter's friend Sly Delvecchio persuades him to take a job as head of airline security. He is surprised to find Marti on duty on his plane to LA. Also on the plane, unbeknown to Cutter, is a lightly-guarded Charles Rane, flying out to stand trial. Rane's accomplices kill his guards and hijack the plane. After a face-off in which Rane kills a passenger, Cutter and Marti escape into the plane's hold, where he releases fuel, forcing the plane to land on a small Louisiana airstrip. He jumps off the plane, but the local police don't believe his story, and Rane escapes, having created a diversion by releasing half the hostages.

Cutter breaks out of police custody and follows Rane to a fairground, where he is apprehended after a violent chase – FBI support having arrived with word of Cutter's credentials – but one gang member remains at large to alert his colleagues on the plane, and new threats to the hostages oblige the police to let Rane re-board. Cutter too gets back on the plane, by jumping onto a wheel as it takes off, and climbs up through the hold, despatching terrorists as he goes. Rane attempts to shield himself with Marti, but after a struggle he is killed falling through an open door. The plane returns to the airport and Cutter and Marti Slayton walk off to the fair together.

For all its somewhat rudimentary plotting, this is a skilful and entertaining action thriller. Right

from the opening sequence, it hits the right targets efficiently and with some style – as a slow Bond-style close-up on the eyes of the terrorist leads into the operating theatre, with Stanley Clarke's score bubbling underneath. There's a compelling non-American menace in suave English hijacker Rane ("known in intelligence circles as 'The Rane of Terror'"), a dash of hate-love romance, a lot of inter-racial buddy action, some designer lifestyle excitement and plenty of fighting. The violence manages to look functional rather than sadistic, even though in fact it isn't, and there's even a metatextual frisson as Snipes is mistaken by a fellow passenger for chat-show host Arsenio Hall.

Bruce Payne as the villain makes his presence felt from the off by refusing an anaesthetic as the plastic surgeon sharpens his scalpel, and goes on to give a performance of sure-footed reptilian menace that Jeroen Krabbe would have been hard-pressed to match. His dialogue – "These passengers, they're so innocent" – is silly and sharp in just the right measure. Perhaps Britain, as current Hollywood myth suggests, really does produce the best bad guys in the world.

Rane's urbane savagery finds a worthy nemesis in Wesley Snipes. Having initially rejected the script because he thought he would have to play the terrorist, Snipes enjoys himself in the white hat role, showing off his martial arts skills and testing the scuff-resistance of his leather jacket with some amusingly gratuitous acrobatics. As he has already shown in *New Jack City*, he is a first-rate action lead, and certainly inspires a lot more confidence in life-or-death situations than Bruce Willis or Kevin Costner.

The scales are not so evenly balanced in Snipes' relations with his fellow law-enforcers. "Put yourself in my position – what would you do?" asks the slow-on-the-uptake local police chief. "I'd kill myself," is Cutter's cheeky but not genuinely hostile response. A warm glow of familial reciprocity lurks elsewhere in police ranks. The hard-bitten but respectful FBI man who gives Snipes' character the support he needs is played by Robert Hooks, father of director Kevin and founder of the pioneering African-American theatre organisation the Negro Ensemble Company, who gave his son his first break, aged nine, on the TV series *NYPD*.

**Ben Thompson**



No seat belt: Wesley Snipes

## Ruby Cairo

USA 1992

Director: Graeme Clifford

**Certificate**  
15  
**Distributor**  
Entertainment  
**Production Company**  
Majestic Films  
**Executive Producer**  
Haruki Kadokawa  
**Producer**  
Lloyd Phillips  
**Line Producer**  
David Nichols  
**Production Executive**  
Paula DeLeon  
**Production Supervisor**  
Laura J. Medina  
Cairo:  
Nigel Goldsack  
**Production Co-ordinators**  
Judi Bunn  
Anne Nevin  
Vera Cruz:  
Emilia Arau  
Cairo:  
Lyn Gibney  
**Production Managers**  
Vera Cruz:  
Grazia Rade  
Berlin:  
Ingrid Windisch  
Athens:  
Dimitris Dimitriadis  
Cairo:  
Ahmed Sami  
**Unit Production Manager**  
David Nichols  
**Unit Managers**  
Vera Cruz:  
Felipe Marino  
Athens:  
Nikos Doukas  
**Location Managers**  
Los Angeles/Cairo:  
Bruce Lawhead  
Los Angeles:  
Kristan Wagner  
Vera Cruz:  
Zane Weiner  
Berlin:  
Gunther Russ  
Berlin 2nd Unit:  
Nicole Haevecker  
Athens:  
Harris Kondorouhas  
Athens 2nd Unit:  
Loukas Yannatos  
Cairo:  
Asma El Bakry  
Sherif Mandour  
**Casting**  
Jennifer Shull  
Voice:  
Barbara Harris  
Vera Cruz:  
Claudia Becker  
Berlin:  
Renate Landkammer  
Athens:  
Max Roman  
Cairo:  
Sue Parker  
**Assistant Directors**  
Don French  
Dennis White  
Jan Sebastian Ballhaus  
Ian Hickinbotham  
2nd Unit:  
Terry Needham  
Kevin De La Noy  
Adam Somner  
Los Angeles:  
Michelle Solotar  
Vera Cruz:  
Sebastian Silva  
Joaquin Silva  
Hugo Gutierrez  
Berlin:  
Sabine Eckhard  
Athens:  
Aristidis Nikoloudis  
Thanassis  
Christopoulos  
Cairo:  
Zaki Wahab  
Artef Hatata  
Tarek Khalil  
Sandra Nashaat  
Sherin Kasem

Los Angeles 2nd Unit:  
Burt Burnam  
**Screenplay**  
Robert Dillon  
Michael Thomas  
**Story**  
Robert Dillon  
**Director of Photography**  
Laszlo Kovacs  
**Colour**  
Technicolor  
**Additional Photography**  
Los Angeles 2nd Unit:  
Paul Edwards  
**2nd Unit Directors of Photography**  
David Burr  
Los Angeles 2nd Unit:  
Michael Gershman  
**Camera Operators**  
Mike Roberts  
Los Angeles:  
Ray de la Motte  
**Steadicam Operator**  
Larry McConkey  
**Editors**  
Caroline Biggerstaff  
Additional:  
Paul Rubell  
Mark Winitzsky  
**Production Designer**  
Richard Sylbert  
**Supervising Art Director**  
John King  
**Art Director**  
Peter Smith  
**Set Design**  
Los Angeles:  
Richard Berger  
**Set Decorators**  
Europe/Los Angeles:  
Jim Erickson  
Los Angeles/Mexico:  
Lisa Fischer  
Vera Cruz:  
Enrique Estevez  
**Set Dressers**  
Athens:  
Anreas Syroyannis  
Kostas Lambropoulos  
**Special Effects Supervisor**  
Los Angeles:  
Robin D'Arcy  
**Special Effects Co-ordinators**  
Los Angeles:  
Larry Fioritto  
Vera Cruz:  
Jesus "Chucho" Duran  
**Special Effects**  
Los Angeles:  
Stephen De Lollis  
James Creason  
Rick Yale  
Berlin:  
Adolf Wojtinek  
**Music**  
John Barry  
**Ethnic Music**  
Robert Randles  
**Music Performed by**  
Flamenco Guitar:  
Ottmar Liebert  
Guitar:  
John Hench  
Percussion:  
Iki Levy  
Oud, etc:  
John Bilezikjian  
Ney:  
Neil Seigel  
Keman:  
Kazem Razazan  
Zurna/Winds:  
Albert Artanian  
Arpa Jarocho/Vocals:  
Santiago Maldonado  
Jarana/Vocals:  
Arpa Jarocho:  
Javier Godines  
Requinto/Vocals:  
Roberto Chagoya  
Vocal Soloist:  
Heriberto Molina  
**Orchestrations**  
Greig McRitchie

**Music Editors**  
Robert Randles  
Clif Kohlweck  
**Songs**  
"The Secrets of My Heart" by John Barry.  
Cynthia Haagens.  
Graeme Clifford,  
performed by Kristina  
Nichols; "You Belong  
To Me" by Pee Wee  
King, Redd Stewart,  
Chilton Price,  
performed by Patsy  
Cline; "Ruby Cairo  
Theme – Flamenco" by  
John Barry, performed  
by Ottmar Liebert,  
Luna Negra  
**Costume Design**  
Rudy Dillon  
**Wardrobe**  
Vera Cruz:  
Ignacio Abel Melo  
**Make-up Artists**  
Chief:  
Marie-Gabrielle  
Selarque  
Elizabeth Dahl  
2nd Unit:  
Julie Bontier  
Vera Cruz:  
Raul Sarmiento  
**Titles**  
Greenberg-Schluter  
**Opticals**  
Cinema Research  
Corporation  
**Supervising Sound Editor**  
Dody Dorn  
**Sound Editors**  
Tony Milch  
Arnold Finkelstein  
Gaston Biraben  
Gloria D'Alessandro  
Donald Flick  
Sam Shaw  
Karen Wilson  
Kimberly Lowe Voigt  
**ADR Supervisor**  
Joe Dorn  
**ADR Editor**  
Cynthia Haagens  
**Foley Editors**  
John Duvall  
Steve Schwalbe  
**Sound Recordists**  
Dom Summer  
Mark "Prito" Long  
ADR/Foley:  
David Jobe  
Mark Harris  
Music:  
Shawn Murphy  
Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recordists**  
Michael Minkler  
Bob Beemer  
Steve Maslow  
ADR/Foley:  
Robert Deschaine  
Linda Corbin  
Charlene Richards  
**Sound Effects Supervisor**  
Blake Leyh

**Cast**  
**Andie MacDowell**  
Bessie Faro  
**Liam Neeson**  
Fergus Lamb  
**Viggo Mortensen**  
Johnny Faro  
**Jack Thompson**  
Ed  
**Paul Spencer**  
Johnny Faro (Boy)  
**Chad Power**  
Niles Faro  
**Monica Mikala**  
Alexandria Faro  
**Kaelynn Craddick**  
Sara Craddick  
Cleo Faro  
**Luis Cortes**  
Alberto Estrella  
Hermes  
**Amy Van Nostrand**  
Marge Swimmer  
**Pedro Gonzalez-Gonzalez**  
Uncle Jorge  
**Lucy Rodriguez**  
Tia Lupe  
**Jeff Corey**  
Joe Dick  
**Miriam Reed**  
Renee Dick  
**Kimberley LaMarque**  
Mailwoman  
**Francine Lee**  
Lily  
**Mariachi & Tecalitlan**  
Mariachi Band  
**Jorge Fegan**  
Undertaker  
**Paco Mauri**  
Coroner  
**Sylvia Short**  
Sage Allen  
**Montrose Hagins**  
Fergus Groupies  
**Lolo Navarro**  
Hotel Proprietress  
**Rodrigo Puebla**  
Juan Antonio Llanes  
**Thomas Frey**  
Bank Tellers  
**Gunter Moissner**  
Herr Bruchner  
**Monica Simon**  
EDK Receptionist  
**Notassa Manisalli**  
Melina  
**Nikos Kouras**  
Kolatos  
**Aristidis Nikoloudis**  
Hotel Concierge  
**Lydia Lenossi**  
Miss Abousief  
**Mandana Marino**  
Miss Hakim  
**Hosni Hasham Zahram**  
Taxi Driver  
**Salh Abu El Asem**  
Warehouse Foreman  
**Maisa El Rafai**  
Woman in Church  
**Negm El Deen**  
**Mohammed Afifi**  
Imam (Mosque)  
**Robin Lee**  
Priest at Funeral  
**Hannaa Hamed Ibrahim**  
Young Mother (Crypt)  
**Folkloric Art Group**  
Ramadan Musicians

**9,966 feet**  
**111 minutes**

Bessie Faro, wife and mother of three, lives a hand-to-mouth existence in Los Angeles. She spends her days watching television and tending to the kids, while her husband Johnny struggles to keep his airplane salvage business going. This quiet routine is disturbed when Johnny is reported dead in a plane crash in Mexico, leaving Bessie with nothing but a mortgage and a stack of unpaid bills. With what little she has Bessie travels to Vera Cruz for the funeral.

In Mexico she encounters Dr Fergus Lamb, a globe-trotting humanitarian who works for Feed The World, an organisation dimly connected with ▶



◀ Johnny's increasingly shady-looking business. In Johnny's office she finds some baseball cards he has marked with a code. Translated, these lead her to a string of massive international bank accounts which, by forging her husband's signature, she clears out. Her travels end in Egypt where she discovers that the sacks of grain imported by Feed The World are actually stuffed with a deadly chemical. She accuses Lamb of subterfuge but he convinces her he knows nothing of the smuggling. Problems at a Cairo bank lead Bessie to suspect that Johnny might still be alive, and eventually she tracks him down. He tells her that he had to fake his death in order to escape murder at the hands of an organisation he had conned. This organisation has been trailing Bessie, however, and now they actually do kill Johnny. Bessie returns home a rich woman. As she and her children pack up to leave their run-down house, Dr Lamb arrives and they all depart together.

● Like last year's *Deceived*, *Ruby Cairo* is an entry in the deceptive spouse genre. Alas, also like *Deceived*, *Ruby Cairo* is not only not an investigation of marriage *per se*, it is not even an investigation of a particular marriage. Since we do not meet Johnny until five minutes from the end of the film, and since Andie MacDowell is an actress with a tight curfew on range (whoever cast her against type as an impoverished working-class mom?), we have no idea what kind of marriage we are dealing with. Even the film's title — *Ruby Cairo* is Johnny's nickname for Bessie — is left unexplained until the closing moments. One is left suspecting that a sizeable expository chunk has been removed from the beginning of the film.

Perhaps by way of compensation, other things are over-explained. Like sub-standard Billy Wilder, the film uses an irksome double narration mode.

Director Graeme Clifford is not content to show us something, he tells us about it as well. When Bessie discovers her husband's hidden baseball cards, we zoom into a close-up of their mysterious markings; meanwhile she tells us in voice-over that "it looks like the way Johnny marks his cards ... it must be a code". It is hard to believe that Clifford edited the sublimely subtle *Don't Look Now* and *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

With its voice-over, the search for a missing partner, the exotic locations, and the smuggling of poison, the film owes a great deal to *The Third Man*. Johnny even gets a Malthusian-Nietzschean speech in which he tries to excuse his running poison all over the world (Viggo Mortensen is no Orson Welles). Yet nothing is made of the opposition between his weary cynicism and Dr Lamb's right-on humanitarianism; in fact the film is such a mess that these two characters never even get to meet. The wonderful Liam Neeson is badly underused, cast as a cut-price Jeff Bridges with nothing to do but look tall.

The scenery, likewise, has nothing to do but look good. Yet there's no gain-saying the fact that look good it does. Cairo takes on the pungent colour of late Matisse, and in Vera Cruz, Berlin and Athens, Laszlo Kovacs's photography is as sumptuously eerie as ever. He is helped in his task by John Barry, who contributes one of his finest scores for years. One might argue that Barry's is the controlling intelligence behind the film: it is not accidental that all the scenes which work are backed by his music and that most of the ones that don't aren't. Between them Barry and Kovacs give the narratively unnecessary ascent of the Pyramid of Cheops a power beyond its functionless beauty. This scene almost makes up for the fact that *Ruby Cairo* is nothing but a plot and the plot nothing but predictable. Almost, but not quite.

Christopher Bray



Bizarre in Cairo: Viggo Mortensen, Andie MacDowell

## The Vanishing

USA 1993

Director: George Sluizer

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

20th Century Fox

### Production Company

20th Century Fox

A Morra, Brezner,

Steinberg and

Tenenbaum

production

### Executive Producers

Pieter Jan Brugge

Lauren Weissman

### Producers

Larry Brezner

Paul Schiff

### Co-producer

Todd Graff

### Production Co-ordinator

Pam Cornfeld-Walker

### Unit Production Manager

Ira Shuman

### Location Manager

Los Angeles:

Peter Roberts

### Location Consultant

Seattle:

Tamara Strange

### Casting

Risa Bramon Garcia

Juel Bestrop

### Assistant Directors

Yudi Bennett

David G. Silverberg

Debra Kent

### Screenplay

Todd Graff

Based on the novel

*The Golden Egg* by

Tim Krabbé

### Director of Photography

Peter Suschitzky

### Colour

DeLuxe

### Aerial Photography

Rex Metz

### Camera Operators

Mitch Dubin

Jeff Lazlo

### Steadicam Operators

Robert Gorelick

Dan Kneece

Elizabeth Ziegler

### Editor

Bruce Green

### Production Designer

Jeannine C. Oppewall

### Art Director

Steve Wolff

### Set Design

Richard Yanez

### Set Decorator

Anne Ahrens

### Set Dressers

Brad Curry

Amy Feldman

Ross Harpold

John Maxwell

Suelyn McClung

Jim Voorhees

### Special Effects

Supervisor:

David Sandlin

Co-ordinator:

James Hart

### Music/Music Director

Jerry Goldsmith

### Supervising Music Editor

Kenneth Hall

### Music Editor

Scott Stambler

### Songs

"Copacabana"

by Barry Manilow,

Bruce Sussman, Jack

Feldman; "Wipe Out"

by Ron Wilson, Robert

Berryhill, James Fuller,

Patrick Connelly;

"Quittin' Time" by Ray

Benson, Tim Dubois,

performed by Asleep

At The Wheel; "Sweet

Rain" by James Michael

Taylor, performed

by Texas Water

### Costume Design

Durinda Wood

### Costume Supervisor

Camille Argus

### Make-up

Edouard Henriques

Sheryl Berkoff-Lowe

### Title Design

RED Productions

### Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

### Supervising Sound Editor

Robert Grieve

### Sound Editors

Stu Bernstein

J.H. Arrufat

Alison Fisher

Michael Dressler

Jonathan Klein

### Supervising ADR Editor

Beth Bergeron

### Supervising Foley Editor

John Murray

### Sound Recordists

Jeff Wexler

Music:

Bruce Botnick

### ADR Recordist

Charlene Richards

### Foley Recordists

Jim Ashwell

Nerses Gezalany

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Steve Maslow

Gregg Landaker

### Foley Artists

Dan O'Connell

Hilda Hodges

### Stunt Co-ordinator

Chris Howell

### Stunts

Perry Barndt

Loyd Catlett

Gil Combs

Gary Edelen

Troy Gilbert

Gene Hartline

Robert Keller

Hanne Borge Kesten

Jaime Jo Medearis

### Bug Wrangler

Steve Kutcher

### Cast

Jeff Bridges

Barney Cousins

Kiefer Sutherland

Jeff Harriman

Nancy Travis

Rita Baker

Sandra Bullock

Diane Shaver

Park Overall

Lynn

Maggie Linderman

Denise Cousins

Lisa Eichhorn

Helene

George Hearn

Arthur Bernard

Lynn Hamilton

Miss Carmichael

Garrett Bennett

Cop at Gas Station

George Catalano

Highway Cop

Frank Girardeau

Cop at Apartment

Stephen Wesley

Bridgewater

TV Host

### Susan Barnes

Colleague

Rich Hawkins

Stan

Michael Kaufman

DMV Clerk

Sabrina Roddy

Cashier

Andrea Lauren Herz

Joanne Schmolli

Women on the Street

Allison Barcott

Woman with Barrette

Aeryk Egan

Young Barney

James Chesnutt

Pump Attendant

### Danielle Zuckerman

Little Girl

Floyd Van Buskirk

Man in Line

Marius Mazmanian

Cook

Gina Gallante

Woman in Ladies

Room

Michael John Hughes

Denise's Boyfriend

Howard Matthew Johnson

DMV Guard

Kristopher Logan

Waiter

9,860 feet

110 minutes

● Washington State, 1989. While renovating his remote mountain cabin, chemistry teacher Barney Cousins rehearses his plan to abduct a young woman. His first few attempts fail dismally. Jeff Harriman and Diane Shaver, on holiday from Seattle, quarrel after their car runs out of gas in a mountain tunnel, but make up again at a service area. When Diane goes to the toilet she is observed by Barney. When she fails to return, Jeff is certain she's been kidnapped, but the police are unconvinced. 1992. Jeff is still obsessively searching for Diane, toting her photograph round the area where she vanished and sticking up posters appealing for help. One night at a roadside diner he meets a waitress, Rita Baker, who moves into his Seattle apartment with him. Jeff lets Rita believe that she's persuaded him to forget Diane, but secretly keeps up the search — and at the urging of a publisher, Arthur Bernard, starts writing the story of his quest.

Rita, discovering what Jeff is up to, confronts him and makes him renounce his search. But Barney, who has been keeping track of Jeff's efforts, writes offering to let him know the truth. Jeff, tormented by curiosity, can't resist responding. Rita storms out. When Barney arrives Jeff beats him up, but still goes with him to the service area where Diane vanished. Barney tells Jeff he can only know what happened by experiencing exactly what Diane did, and gives him drugged coffee to drink. Jeff awakes to find himself buried alive. Learning Barney's car number from a neighbour, Rita finds her way to the cabin with the help of Barney's daughter Denise. Despite Rita's resistance, Barney overpowers her, but by pretending she has kidnapped Denise she induces him to drink his own drugged coffee and dashes out to start exhuming Jeff. Barney, on whom the drug has yet to take effect, attacks her, but Jeff emerges from his coffin and kills him. Lunching with Arthur Bernard, Jeff and Rita both firmly refuse coffee.

● *Spoorloos/The Vanishing*, the 1988 Dutch/French thriller of which this is the Hollywood version, achieved its insidious creepiness by a deft meshing of several off-kilter elements. There was the plot structure, wrong-footing us by setting up the young man's search before switching, via an unsignalled flashback, into the world





Missing in action: Kiefer Sutherland

of the abductor; the twitchy disorientation of the hero, adrift in a strange language and culture (turning the film's bilingual provenance to good effect); a chillingly grim and hopeless dénouement; and above all the unsettling ordinariness of Bernard-Pierre Donnadieu's killer, a walking paradigm of the banality of evil.

All of this, or pretty nearly all of it, is jettisoned in the remake. The happy ending was only to be expected: no mainstream Hollywood movie is going to leave its hero buried alive beyond hope of rescue. But *The Vanishing*, as if mistrustful of its audience's patience, throws away its best trick by revealing right from the start how Diane will be abducted. With the mystery at least half defused, much of the tension leaks away.

And given that both films share the same director, George Sluizer, it's also odd that there's no attempt to replicate the original's edgy cross-cultural slip-page. Jeff and Diane are from Seattle, Barney's environment is mountain-country small-town: ample scope for playing off urban against rural, *Deliverance* style. But in the event everyone acts much the same wherever they're from. Bridges plays Barney in his nice-nasty *Jagged Edge* mode, tricked out with an unfocused, intermittent accent that veers distractingly from downtown Montreal to Yogi Bear. Sutherland never gets much beyond one-note dogged, but Nancy Travis turns in a good gutsy performance that almost redeems the routine female-in-jeopardy climax. (Nothing, though, could redeem the final gag about the coffee.)

It wouldn't be fair to dismiss *The Vanishing* as a total write-off. It's a lot less crass than most Hollywood retreads of European box-office hits, and Sluizer retains at least some of the earlier film's sinuous, understated menace. In fact, if only one could forget the original, the US version would seem like an interestingly off-beat venture, unusual if not wholly achieved. But there's the problem: it's never been possible to forget the original, one of those quietly implacable films that lodge like a splinter under the skin of the mind. The remake will probably have sunk from memory within weeks.

Philip Kemp

## TV FILM

# The Snapper

United Kingdom 1993

Director: Stephen Frears

### Distributor

BBC TV

### Production Company

BBC Films

For Screen 2

### Executive Producer

Mark Shivas

### Producer

Lynda Myles

### Associate Producer

Ian Hopkins

### Production Managers

Mary Allegven

Melanie Dicks

### Location Managers

John McDonnell

Niall O'Meachair

### Casting

Leo Davis

### Assistant Directors

Martin O'Malley

Mick Walsh

Robert Walpole

### Screenplay

Roddy Doyle

Based on his novel

### Director of Photography

Oliver Stapleton

In colour

### Editor

Mick Audsley

### Production Designer

Mark Geraghty

### Costume Design

Consolata Boyle

### Make-up Designers

Morna Ferguson

Jennifer Hegarty

### Dubbing Editors

Peter Joly

Dan Gane

### Sound Recordist

Kieran Horgan

Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordists

Peter Maxwell

Mick Boggis

### Cast

Tina Kellegher

Sharon Curley

Colm Meaney

Dessie Curley

Ruth McCabe

Kay Curley

Eanna MacLiam

Craig Curley

Peter Rowen

Sonny Curley

Joanne Gerrard

Lisa Curley

Colm O'Byrne

Darren Curley

Fionnuala Murphy

Jacky

Deirdre O'Brien

Mary

Karen Woodley

Yvonne

### Pat Laffon

George Burgess

Virginia Cole

Doris Burgess

Denis Menton

Pat Burgess

Brendan Gleeson

Lester

Ronan Wilmot

Paddy

Stuart Dunne

Bertie

Dylan Tighe

Boy

Caroline Boyle

Girl

Jennifer Kelly

Checkout Woman

Audrey Carr

Customer/Neighbour

Stanley Townsend

Anaesthetist

Cathy Bolton

Desk Nurse

Miriam Kelly

Doctor

Eleanor Methven

Doctor Cook

Birdy Sweeney

Loner

Barbara Bergin

Billie Morton

Midwives

Joan Sheehy

Woman in Hospital

Rynagh O'Grady

Sheila Flitton

Neighbours

Cathleen Delaney

Owl'one

Ailish Connolly

Nurse

Jack Lynch

Policeman

Stephen Kennedy

Supermarket

Trainee Manager

Britta Smith

Woman in

Police Station

Conor Evans

Helen Roach

Marie Coansee

Jimmy Keogh

Barrytown Neighbours

Aisling Conlan

Alannah McMullen

Baby Curley

Tom Murphy

Robbie Doolan

Pals

Matthew Devereux

Young Lad/Dad

Famine

Sandy

8,003 feet

(at 25 fps)

90 minutes

resolutely unappealing middle-aged neighbour George Burgess, the laughing stock of the street and the father of Yvonne, one of Sharon's best friends. Sharon is not unhappy to be pregnant, however. Her friends are amused, and all proceeds smoothly until George starts bragging about his exploits to his cronies at the football club. Sharon threatens him with exposure to his wife, and Dessie threatens him with violence, but the secret is out.

Worse still, George has decided that he loves Sharon, and leaves home. Mrs Burgess storms round to the Curleys' house making accusations, and Kay slaps her. Sharon scorns George's protestations of love, and tries to salvage the situation by claiming that her impregnation was the work of a Spanish sailor, but no one believes her. Craig, returned from overseas, takes it upon himself to break the Burgesses' window, and is arrested. Dessie too is angry and humiliated, and gets into a fight – supposedly defending Sharon's honour, but really defending his own.

Only when Sharon threatens to leave home does he see the error of his ways. Dessie starts to take an active interest in the pregnancy, reading up on the female physiognomy; his newfound knowledge launches him and Kay on a voyage of sexual discovery. After the odd false alarm, Sharon is rushed to hospital in Dessie's van. The birth is painful but the baby is healthy, and Sharon decides to call her Georgina. The whole Curley clan arrives at the hospital, complete with their dog Famine, and Georgina is received into the family.

Stephen Frears' return from Hollywood to the medium that made his name could hardly have been more auspicious. In fact, this wholly successful dramatisation of the second part of Roddy Doyle's vibrant Barrytown trilogy made for an incongruously triumphant climax to a Screen 2 season which consistently confused quality with 'quality'. Doyle's deliciously ripe dialogue and the endeavours of an immaculate ensemble cast threw the preciousness and mundanity of so many previous weeks' films into cruelly sharp relief.

*The Snapper* would doubtless have been filmed even if *The Commitments* had not made a big-screen splash to whet commissioning appetites; but the success of Alan Parker's all-singing, all-dancing version of the first instalment of Doyle's triptych did have an impact on Frears' film. The makers of *The Commitments*, hoping for a sequel, retain the rights to the Rabbitte family name and the character of Jimmy Jnr. Doyle, adapting his own book to the screen, is therefore in the happy position of adding characters and changing names to accommodate the success of his last self-adaptation: the comically chauvinistic Craig substitutes ably for the suave Jimmy Jnr, and the dog Larrygogan is now Famine.

Despite these changes, and the rather laboured extension of the book's concluding birth scenes, it is *The*

*Snapper* that is the truer of the two films to its literary blueprint. This comes as no real surprise, BBC grit at its best being traditionally grittier than the Hollywood variety. But Doyle's screenplay and Frears' direction pull off a notable coup in capturing the warmth and vitality of their source material without ever lapsing into *The Commitments'* rather self-congratulatory, glitzed-up Irishry. Frears' assertion that he "went to Ireland, met Irish people and tried to understand them" and ended up "loving them all" had raised alarm bells.

One of the main problems with today's TV drama is that it doesn't have enough swearing in it. Doyle's "bad" language – the musical "feck"s and "bollix"s which score his characters' every move – is transparently good language, and credit is due to whoever decided it shouldn't be toned down. The actors raise their game to match the stellar quality of the dialogue. Tina Kellegher's central performance is commendably still and strong. Sometimes – for example when she's drunk in a club being sick into her handbag ("It'll hold!") – the part veers towards proletarian-gothic, but she always keeps a tight hold on Sharon's dignity. Colm Meaney (who also played Dessie in *The Commitments*) blossoms to fill the space she leaves, his charming volubility combining beautifully with the eloquent quietness of Ruth McCabe's Kay. Much credit is due to Pat Laffon too, for making the tragically menopausal George Burgess so memorably repugnant without ever undermining his humanity. His line "We are, as the old saying goes, 'Torn between two lovers'" is one that scores itself onto the memory.

Frears' direction makes no claims to auteurship and is all the better for that; rather, there's a single-minded concentration on establishing the right environment for the dialogue to do its work. This means bright colours as well as rainy drabness. The smallness of the Curleys' house is integral to their chaotic sense of community – the constant distractions of warring family members furnish vital perspective as well as extra stress in moments of crisis – but Frears does well not to overplay the closeness of their domestic environment. The camera does not, as sometimes in *Brookside*, for example, seem like one presence too many in a cardboard box full of sound men. Even when the whole Curley clan are crammed into their front room watching the telly, there's still room for the characters to breathe.

It might not seem like a compliment to say that *The Snapper* fits neatly into the box in the corner, but it should do. There's no shame in doing great work for TV, and more people get to see it that way. While recent British cinema productions like *Splitting Heirs* and *Leon the Pig Farmer* look as if they would have been happier made for the small screen, *The Snapper* fully deserves the accolade of opening the Directors Fortnight at Cannes.

Ben Thompson



# VIDEO

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental releases and laser discs and Peter Dean new retail videos

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* (MFB) and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will simply be listed and the film review reference given in parentheses

## Rental

### Bitter Moon (Lunes de fiel)

France/UK 1992/  
Columbia TriStar CVT 16857

*Certificate 18* Director Roman Polanski  
A stuffy English couple share a cruise with a crippled writer and his sexually intriguing partner. Raw nerves and assorted body parts are on display in this paean to obsessive desire. (S&S October 1992)

### Boomerang

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2687

*Certificate 15* Director Reginald Hudlin  
A promiscuous man (Eddie Murphy) has a taste of his own medicine when he encounters an equally feisty woman. An uninspiring comedy. (S&S November 1992)

### Chaplin

UK 1992/Guild 8703

*Certificate 15* Director Richard Attenborough  
A rambling bio-pic, short on detail and insight, but rescued from irrelevance by Robert Downey Jr's brilliant performance. The modern-day wraparound in which Chaplin narrates his life to his biographer (Anthony Hopkins) is dreadful. (S&S January 1993)

### Dust Devil

USA 1992/Polygram Video PG 1003

*Certificate 18* Director Richard Stanley  
(See review on page 51 of this issue)

### Folks!

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20188

*Certificate PG* Director Ted Kotcheff  
Black humour and knockabout gags sit uncomfortably in Ted Kotcheff's morbid comedy about the generation gap. A successful Chicago stockbroker's life is ruined by the intrusion of his terminally ill parents. (S&S February 1993)

### Glengarry Glen Ross

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 18739

*Certificate 15* Director James Foley  
A superb adaptation of David Mamet's play about the horrors of professional salesmanship. Al Pacino, Ed Harris and Alan Arkin are great, but it's Jack Lemmon who steals the show. (S&S November 1992)

### Husbands and Wives

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 14597

*Certificate 15* Director Woody Allen  
Allen's finest work for years combines the acerbic wit of his most pleasurable comedies with the painful intimacy of *Interiors*. Two couples struggle to keep their marriages intact, surveyed by Carlo Di Palma's hand-held camera. (S&S November 1992)

### Juice

USA 1992/FoxVideo 5832

*Certificate 15* Director Ernest R. Dickerson  
An ambitious, highly promising directorial debut by Spike Lee's former

cinematographer. The humdrum street-lives of four youths are shaken by the ruthless ambitions of one of their number. Hard-hitting. (S&S October 1992)

### The Last of the Mohicans

USA 1992/Warner PEV 12619

*Certificate 15* Director Michael Mann  
Unashamedly romantic adaptation of James Fenimore Cooper's novel. Mann's adaptation is gripping and powerful with elements of gasp-inducing brutality. An excellent performance by Daniel Day-Lewis. (S&S November 1992)

### Night and the City

USA 1992/First Independent VA 20187

*Certificate 15* Director Irwin Winkler  
An uncertain remake of Jules Dassin's noir classic. Richard Price's vivid script transfers the London wrestling background of the original to a New York boxing milieu, but the piece lacks punch. (S&S February 1993)

### Night on Earth

USA 1991/Electric Pictures EP 0025

*Certificate 15* Director Jim Jarmusch  
A lively portmanteau chronicling five simultaneous taxi rides through five cities. Although uneven, the stories are bound together by Jarmusch's uncanny eye for human interaction. Ambitious, thoughtful and often hilarious. (S&S August 1992)



Taxi driver: Winona Ryder in 'Night on Earth'

### Of Mice and Men

USA 1992/Warner PEV 52693

*Certificate PG* Director Gary Sinise  
John Malkovich hams it up as an amiable simpleton in this handsomely mounted adaptation of John Steinbeck's novel. Strong support from Casey Siemaszko as the brutish Curley. (S&S January 1993)

### Raising Cain

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1613

*Certificate 15* Director Brian De Palma  
De Palma is back on form in this camp psycho-chiller pastiche. John Lithgow is terrific in his multiple roles. (S&S December 1992)

### Single White Female

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 14588

*Certificate 18* Director Barbet Schroeder  
An initially tense and promising film which turns into a shallow mainstream thriller. Jennifer Jason Leigh outshines Bridget Fonda. (S&S November 1992)

### Sniper

USA 1992/EV EVV 1229

*Certificate 15* Director Luis Llosa  
Despite one or two moments of tension, this thriller set in Panama quickly deteriorates into farce. Former pen-pusher Billy Zane joins trigger-happy assassin Tom Berenger in a covert mission. Watch out for the tacked-on happy ending. (S&S April 1993)

### Stepkids

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 14177

*Certificate PG* Director Joan Micklin Silver  
Trite nonsense concerning the traumas of a group of kids, related through the multiple couplings of their equally grating parents and step-parents. Terrible plodding script. (S&S August 1992)

### Unlawful Entry

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1977

*Certificate 18* Director Jonathan Kaplan  
An excitingly nasty and manipulative thriller. Ray Liotta is terrific as the over-zealous neighbourhood cop who first covets, then terrorises Kurt Russell's cosy home and beautiful wife. (S&S November 1992)

## Rental premiere

### Angel of Fury

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 17917

*Certificate 18* Director David Worth  
Producer Gope T. Samtani Screenplay Clifford Mohr Lead Actors Cynthia Rothrock, Billy Drago, Sam Jones, Greg Stuart, George Rudy 91 minutes  
This is Cynthia Rothrock's finest high-kicking performance to date. David Worth injects kinetic power into the fight sequences and Rothrock proves that she can act as well as scrap.

### The Babe

USA 1991/CIC Video VHA 1582

*Certificate PG* Director Arthur Hiller  
Producer/Screenplay John Fusco Lead Actors John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, Bruce Boxleitner 110 minutes  
An amiable bio-pic chronicling the life and times of baseball hero George Herman 'Babe' Ruth. John Goodman is his usual endearing self in the title role.

### Blown Away

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 19965

*Certificate 18* Director Brenton Spencer  
Producer Peter R. Simpson Screenplay Robert C. Cooper, Ilana Frank Lead Actors Corey Haim, Corey Feldman, Nicole Eggert, Gary Farmer, Kathleen Robertson 92 minutes  
Haim and Feldman look too youthful to give credibility to this daft "erotic" thriller. There is enjoyment to be had, however, as a feisty femme fatale lures her companions into a web of deceit and murder.

### Citizen Cohn

USA 1992/Warner PEV 35580

*Certificate 15* Director Frank Pierson  
Producer Doro Bachrach Screenplay David Franzoni Lead Actors James Woods, Joe Don Baker, Joseph Bologna, Ed Flanders, Frederic Forrest 108 minutes  
A classy and hard-hitting TV movie documenting the ruthless career of lawyer and communist witch-hunter Roy Cohn. James Woods is great as the Aids-stricken Cohn, who surveys his life and diabolical deeds from his deathbed.

### Cyborg Cop

USA 1993/Medusa MO 390

*Certificate 18* Director Sam Firstenberg  
Producer Danny Lerner Screenplay Greg Latter Lead Actors David Bradley, John Rhys Davies, Alonna Shaw,



Leslie Felperin Sharman on the business of children's video

# Brat packaging

Anyone woken up by a restless six-year-old at 7am on a Sunday will attest that there are few things more useful to have around the house than a videotape of cartoons. Video distributors know their products are useful weapons in the war against juvenile boredom. That's why marketing campaigns for sell-through children's animation accelerate during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays – leisure time for the young which videos neatly fill. Demographic studies of the leisure-spend show that families rely increasingly on home entertainment, especially videos and video games.

Children often treat videos like their favourite storybooks, imbibing them repeatedly, and it obviously makes more economic sense to buy once than to rent ten times. In this, videos offer an interesting parallel with the book trade. In the mid-nineteenth century, when readers began to buy books rather than borrow them from lending libraries, didactic tomes for children were the first to be acquired. The growth of sell-through today indicates that the same shift is happening with videos, albeit more quickly. Animated videos for children are the Flintstonian bedrock of the sell-through market.

The Walt Disney corporation's distribution arm, Buena Vista, is the market leader by several laps. According to the 1991 figures, the company took over a third (36.1 per cent) of total sell-through sales. With the release of two hugely popular 'classics' – *Peter Pan* this spring and *Beauty and the Beast* due out in the UK before Christmas – Buena Vista's slice of the pie chart looks likely to swell even further by the end of 1993.

Not only do Disney's products look sleek and child-friendly, from the bright covers to the realist plenitude of the

animation, but more importantly, they induce a nostalgic fever for happier, more innocent times. Nostalgia – a key factor in the features' enduring appeal – is cleverly exploited by both the films themselves and the marketing rubric. The stories depict an ersatz, pre-lapsarian fairyland, based loosely on classics of children's literature, whose temporal existence is always located prior to the viewer's lifetime. Elided with this is the adult buyer's memory of his or her childhood introduction to cinema, often one that began with a Disney movie.

Part of Disney's success is undoubtedly due to the association of the name with the notion of 'quality', implying both technical polish and moral probity. A name alone is often enough to sell the product into the straw-clutching hands of desperate parents, the true target audience, because out of the vast selection of children's videos, Disney represents known and tested territory. Even lesser-known lines such as 'Sing-A-Long tapes', cartoon compilations and new products like *Duck Tales*, originating as they do from the Magic Kingdom, seem to offer an in-built guarantee that they will transform the most ordinary living room into Disneyland for 90 minutes.

Buena Vista has broken new ground by expanding the field of sale to include supermarkets, toy shops and Mothercare stores – in fact, anywhere parents might go to spend money. According to marketing manager James Thickett, Disney's 'cycling' policy means that classic features are re-released every seven years to catch a new generation, while new films are issued on video between a year and 18 months after the theatrical release, depending on popularity. Thanks to children's desire to collect merchandising, Disney has

successfully fostered "a culture of Disney classic collectors".

Since 7 to 14-year-olds are the only section of the movie audience to have shrunk over the last few years, children's animation has come to rely increasingly on video revenue. TV cartoons are packaged for video close to the time of their broadcast – Pickwick Videos, who produced the notorious *The Lover's Guide*, also handles *Astro Farm* for ITV, *Juniper Jungle* for BBC and the highly successful *The Tales of Beatrix Potter*. Without the instant recognition factor the Disney name carries, such titles rely on more subtle, some might say sinister, marketing techniques. To promote *Astro Farm*, Pickwick has cut a deal with the Dairy Milk Council that will get the product's name into schools under the guise of promoting the wholesome qualities of milk. Twentieth Century Fox has gone one step further with *FernGully*, producing a "fax sheet" on environmental issues for teachers which coincidentally raises consciousness about the availability of the sell-through video. Sales of the tape might even exceed profits from the theatrical release.

Marketing strategies such as this indicate how desperate video distributors are to lacquer their products with a veneer of educational respectability. One can hardly blame them in the light of the rising moral panic about children's viewing habits, set to be aggravated when the BBC broadcasts the violent and hilarious American Nickelodeon import *The Ren & Stimpy Show*. Until the much-publicised TV-lock, which can control who watches what and when, comes on the market, children's animated videos, promising in-built moral sanitation, offer a half-way measure attractive to parents at pains to control what children glean from the electronic babysitter.

Rufus Swart, Todd Jensen 93 minutes  
Although this martial arts/sci-fi hybrid steals from *Terminator*, *RoboCop* and *Universal Soldier*, it still maintains a glimmer of originality. A power-crazed scientist threatens the world with an army of robot assassins. Some effective special effects make this watchable trash.

## Deadly Relations

USA 1992/CIC Video VHB 2747

*Certificate 15* Director Bill Condon Producer Ed Milkovich Screenplay Dennis Nemec, based on the book by Carol Donahue, Shirley Hall Lead Actors Robert Urich, Shelley Fabares, Roxana Zal 89 minutes  
A domineering father obsessed with success and 'happy family' lifestyle turns to murder and a convoluted insurance scam. Urich lends credibility to this true-life trauma movie.

## Dirty Tricks

USA 1992/Warner PEV 35581

*Certificate 15* Director Michael Lindsay-Hogg Producers Marvin Worth, James D. Brubaker Screenplay A.L. Appling Lead Actors Diane Keaton, Ed Harris, Ed Begley Jr 88 minutes  
A solid, made-for-TV drama which takes timely swipes at the division between politicians' personal and public lives. A senator falls for a high-school flame with a tarnished past. Top marks go to Ed Begley Jr as Keaton's neurotic brother.

## Final Approach

USA 1991/Hi-Fi Fliers HFV 8232

*Certificate 15* Director/Producer Eric Steven Stahl Screenplay Eric Steven Stahl, Gerald Laurence Lead Actors James B. Sicking, Hector Elizondo, Madolyn Smith, Kevin McCarthy 97 minutes  
Impressive hi-tech special effects by John Star Wars Dykstra dominate this thriller about an air force colonel stricken with amnesia following a crash landing.

## The Great Diamond Robbery

USA 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 20048

*Certificate 15* Director Al Waxman Producer Stewart Harding Screenplay Michael Norrell Lead Actors Brian Dennehy, Ben Cross, Kate Nelligan 92 minutes  
A notorious diamond thief is released from jail and employed by an insurance company to test the efficiency of a security system guarding the world's largest diamond. This is average fare spoilt by the obviousness of the silly twist ending.

## In Excess

Italy 1992/20.20 Vision NVT 16785

*Certificate 18* Director Maur Bolognini Producer Galliano Juso Screenplay Sergio Bazzini, based on the novel by Alberto Moravia Lead Actors Julian Sands, Joanna Pacula 94 minutes  
Pretentious Euro-production which shifts between haunting lyricism and self-indulgence. Julian Sands is perfectly cast as a fey Englishman whose highly-sexed wife spends her weekends with her violent macho lover.

## Power Play

USA 1992/Warner PEV 35582

*Certificate 15* Director Alastair Reid Producers John Kemeny Screenplay Abby Mann, based on the book *Mobbed Up* by James Neff Lead Actors Brian Dennehy,



Flying into the home and heart: Disney's child-friendly 'Peter Pan'



Jeff Daniels, Maria Conchita Alonso  
106 minutes  
True-life drama lent weight by Brian Dennehy's performance. A union leader feeds information to the FBI in an attempt to rid his organisation of corruption. Released, presumably, to cash in on Danny DeVito's *Hoffa*.

#### Rapid Fire

USA 1992/FoxVideo 1978

*Certificate 18* Director Dwight H. Little  
Producer Robert Lawrence Screenplay Alan McElroy, story by Cindy Cirile, Alan McElroy *Lead Actors* Brandon Lee, Powers Boothe, Nick Mancuso, Raymond J. Barry 95 minutes  
Lee's penultimate film is an efficient, if uninspiring, martial arts action adventure. Lee is caught in the crossfire between Chicago police and mafia thugs after witnessing a gang slaying.

#### Silent Thunder

USA 1992/  
Imperial Entertainment IMP 122  
*Certificate 15* Director Craig Baxley  
Producer Jay Benson Screenplay Dennis Shryack, Michael Blodgett  
*Lead Actors* Stacy Keach, Lisa Banes, Sandahl Bergman, Tom Bower 88 minutes  
True story action vehicle that stretches credulity to breaking point as a father (Keach) avenges the death of his son at the hands of a renegade trucker.

#### Stranded

USA 1991/  
Imperial Entertainment IMP 123  
*Certificate 15* Director Paul Tucker  
Producers Patrick Payne, Harold Cole  
Screenplay Boon Collins, Phil Savath, Dan Vining, Deborah Wakeham, based on a story by Daniel D. Williams  
*Lead Actors* Deborah Wakeham, Ryan Michael, Stephen E. Miller 88 minutes  
Unremarkable effort that blends erotic thriller with psychodrama to produce a tepid concoction. A womanising scoundrel and his wife are terrorised during a holiday on a remote island.

#### Sunset Grill

USA 1992/EV EVV 1243  
*Certificate 18* Director Kevin Connor  
Producer Faruque Ahmed Screenplay Not credited *Lead Actors* Peter Weller, Lori Singer, Stacy Keach, John Rhys-Davies, Alexandra Paul 99 minutes  
An alcoholic private investigator teams up with an old policeman buddy to investigate the brutal murder of his wife. Weller and Keach are an endearing double-act, but the movie is predictable.

#### A Taste for Killing

USA 1992/CIC Video VHA 1628  
*Certificate 15* Director Lou Antonio  
Producer Michael Murphey Screenplay Dan Bronson *Lead Actors* Michael Biehn, Henry Thomas, Jason Bateman 83 minutes  
Michael Biehn does a good job playing the villain for a change in this moderately entertaining action-thriller. Two wealthy students enjoy a summer job on an oil rig until a deceptively charming lunatic traps them in a web of murder and extortion.

#### Those Bedroom Eye

USA 1992/Columbia TriStar CVT 20047  
*Certificate 18* Director Leon Ichason  
Producer Kimberly Myers Screenplay

Deborah Dalton *Lead Actors* Mimi Rogers, Tim Matheson 89 minutes  
A suicidal man, grieving for his dead wife, is rescued from the brink by a sexually voracious career woman with a mysterious secret. A well-written and entertainingly daft psychological thriller.

## Retail

#### Animal Farm

UK 1955/BBC V 4961 Price £10.99

*Certificate U*

*Directors* John Halas, Joy Batchelor  
Ambitious animated version of George Orwell's political fable in which farm animals oust their masters only to discover tyrants among themselves. (MFB No. 253)

#### The Apartment

USA 1960/Warner SO 51307 Price £8.99

*Certificate PG* Director Billy Wilder

An insurance clerk who uses his apartment as a rendezvous for his bosses and their mistresses falls in love with the elevator girl Shirley MacLaine and turns his back on his lucrative career. B/W (MFB No. 319)

#### Asylum

UK 1972/MPCO VIP 034 Price £12.99

*Certificate 15* Director Roy Ward Baker  
A home for the criminally insane is the setting for four seemingly unrelated Hammer-style horror yarns. Grand Guignol with an all-star cast camping it up to fine effect. (MFB No. 464)

#### A Bullet for the General (Quien sabe?)

Italy 1966/Aktiv AKT 0001 Price £12.99/Widescreen

*Certificate 18* Director Damiano Damiani  
A Mexican revolutionary explains his cause to a gringo who, unbeknown to him, is an American mercenary hired to assassinate him. Excellent political Mexi-Western. Scriptwriter Franco Solinas went on to write *The Battle of Algiers*. (MFB No. 425)

#### The Burden of Proof

USA 1992/Odyssey ODY 754 Price £10.99

*Certificate 15* Director Mike Robe  
(S&S Video September 1992)

#### The Dam Busters

UK 1954/Warner SO 38086 Price £10.99

*Certificate U* Director Michael Anderson  
The story of Dr Barnes Wallis and his innovative bouncing bomb which was intended to destroy the Ruhr dams and halt German industry. A 50th anniversary edition. B/W (MFB No. 257)

#### Deadly Bet

USA 1991/MIA VIA 7540 Price £10.99

*Certificate 18*  
Director Richard W. Munchkin  
(S&S Video December 1992)

#### Django Strikes Again

(Il Grande ritorno di Django)

Italy 1987/Aktiv AKT 0002 Price £12.99

*Certificate 18* Director Ted Archer  
Producer Not credited Screenplay Nello Rossati, Franco Reggiani *Lead Actors* Franco Nero, Christopher Connelly, Donald Pleasence 88 minutes

Unlikely monk Django digs up his coffin, dusts off his machine gun and returns



Getting their kicks: 'Easy Rider'

to his old ways when a wretched count starts enslaving peasants. The only one of 30 *Django* sequels that features Franco Nero.

#### Drunken Angel (Yoidore Tenshi)

Japan 1948/Connoisseur Video CR 115  
Price £15.99

*Certificate PG* Director Akira Kurosawa  
Producer Not credited Screenplay Akira Kurosawa, Uegusa Keinosuke  
*Lead Actors* Takashi Shimura, Toshiro Mifune, Reizaburo Yamamoto, Michiyo Kogure 93 minutes  
An alcoholic doctor removes a bullet from a young gangster and becomes involved with the underworld. Kurosawa's first serious film. B/W Subtitles

#### Easy Rider

USA 1969/Columbia TriStar CVR 40005 Price £10.99/Widescreen

*Certificate 18* Director Dennis Hopper  
Two drop-outs fund a motorbike journey from LA to New Orleans with drugs money, in the process discovering themselves and America. Hopper makes excellent use of Death Valley scenery in this seminal 60s road movie. (MFB No. 429)

#### Elvira Madigan

Sweden 1967/Tartan Video TVT 1079S Price £15.99/Widescreen

*Certificate PG* Director Bo Widerberg  
A beautiful-looking confection about a tightrope walker and a married army officer who retreat to a rural idyll where their passion becomes fatal. Mozart's "Piano Concerto no. 21" is played ad nauseam. Subtitles (MFB No. 412)

#### Face to Face (Faccia a faccia)

Italy/Spain 1967/Aktiv AKT 0003  
Price £12.99/Widescreen

*Certificate 15* Director Sergio Sollima  
A group of bandits acquire a new leader who advocates an intellectual and cultural use of violence. This, the second of Sollima's three political Westerns, is an allegory for the rise of European fascism. (MFB No. 425)

#### First Name Carmen (Prénom Carmen)

France/Switzerland 1983/  
Artificial Eye ART 056 Price £15.99

*Certificate 18* Director Jean-Luc Godard

Godard's comic-strip version of *Carmen* is set in modern day Paris. Carmen is a gang member who seduces a security guard and then uses the film her uncle (Godard) is making as a cover for a kidnapping. Subtitles (MFB No. 601)

#### For the Boys

USA 1991/FoxVideo 5595 Price £10.99

*Certificate 15* Director Mark Rydell  
(S&S February 1992)

#### The Fortune Cookie

USA 1966/MGM/UA SO 52115 Price £8.99

*Certificate U* Director Billy Wilder  
A TV cameraman (Jack Lemmon) is accidentally injured while filming a football game and his crooked brother-in-law lawyer (Walter Matthau) decides to sue the sportsman responsible, while Lemmon wrestles with his conscience. Original UK title: *Meet Whiplash Willie* B/W (MFB No. 402)

#### Full Metal Jacket

UK/USA 1987/Warner PES 11760  
Price £10.99

*Certificate 18* Director Stanley Kubrick  
A schematic and effective Vietnam saga in which a group of recruits are put through boot camp and then face action in the Tet Offensive. The action centres on the deaths of a US marine and a Vietcong soldier. (MFB No. 645)

#### Grave of the Vampire

USA 1972/VIPCO VIP 032 Price £12.99

*Certificate 18* Director John Hayes  
A 400-year-old vampire attacks a courting couple in a graveyard and impregnates the woman. The offspring sets out to discover his birthright and wreak revenge on his unholy father. (MFB No. 485)

#### The Hand that Rocks the Cradle

USA 1992/Hollywood D 913340  
Price £10.99

*Certificate 15* Director Curtis Hanson  
(S&S May 1992)

#### The Hours and Times

USA 1991/ICA Projects ICAV 1004  
Price £10.99

*Certificate 18* Director Christopher Munch  
The Beatles' manager Brian Epstein takes John Lennon to Barcelona for four days R&R. Homoerotic tension is palpable as



the insecure middle-class Jewish Epstein confides in the brash working-class hero Lennon. *B/W* (S&S October 1992)

#### The Incredible Melting Man

USA 1977/VIPCO VIP 035 Price £12.99  
Certificate 18 Director William Sachs  
A spaceman returns from Saturn with a bacteria which eats his flesh and leaves him craving for more. Rick Baker's special effects makes this sci-fi horror particularly revolting. (MFB No. 530)

#### Inferno

Italy 1980/FoxVideo WC 1140  
Price £12.99/Widescreen  
Certificate 18 Director Dario Argento  
A New York poet who lives in a satanic house, becomes obsessed with evil lurking in the basement. Smashing set-pieces and distinctive lighting sets off this follow-up to *Suspiria*. (MFB No. 561)

#### Ju Dou

Japan/China 1990/ICA Projects ICAV 1001  
Price £12.99  
Certificate 15  
Directors Zhang Yimou, Yang Fengliang  
The third wife of a sadistic dye workshop owner in 20s rural China bears the child of her adopted nephew and is made to suffer the consequences. This disturbing tale is a visual feast. Subtitles (MFB No. 687)

#### The Lawnmower Man

UK/USA 1992/  
First Independent VA 30291/30293  
Price £10.99/Fullscreen/Widescreen  
Certificate 15 Director Brett Leonard  
(S&S June 1992)

#### Little Man Tate

USA 1991/Columbia TriStar CVR 22829  
Price £10.99  
Certificate PG Director Jodie Foster  
(S&S February 1992)

#### The Lower Depths (Donzoko)

Japan 1957/Connoisseur Video CR 116  
Price £15.99  
Certificate PG Director Akira Kurosawa  
Producer Not credited Screenplay Akira Kurosawa, Hideo Oguni, based on the play by Maxim Gorky Lead Actors Isuzu Yamada, Toshiro Mifune, Ganjiro Nakamura, Koji Mitsui, Bokuzen Hidari 120 minutes  
A pedlar wanted by the police takes refuge in a hovel inhabited by derelicts. Filmed mainly in one room, this is based on the play by Gorky. *B/W* Subtitles

#### The Magician (Anisktet)

Sweden 1958/Tartan Video TVT 1066S Price £15.99/Widescreen  
Certificate PG Director Ingmar Bergman  
A nineteenth-century magician and his troupe are subjected to brutal interrogation by three customs officials. The magician bides his time before taking revenge. Aka: *The Face*  
*B/W* Subtitles (MFB No. 310)

#### A Man Escaped (Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé, ou Le Vent souffle où il veut)

France 1956/Artificial Eye ART 057  
Price £15.99  
Certificate U Director Robert Bresson  
A French resistance fighter is captured by the Nazis and imprisoned in a fortress from which he endeavours to escape. Based on fact, the impersonal style and use of non-professional

actors lend an authentic feel and make this a must-see. One of 100 European classic films which have a subsidy from the European Commission to enable a video release.  
*B/W* Subtitles (MFB No. 283)

#### Marquis

Belgium/France 1989/  
ICA Projects ICAV 1003 Price £12.99  
Certificate 18 Director Henri Xhonneux  
The Marquis becomes an aristocratic spaniel in this version of the de Sade tale. Residing in the Bastille prior to the French Revolution, the Marquis spends his time philosophising to his erect penis - Colin. A literary *Meet the Feebles* with much to enjoy. Subtitles (S&S July 1992)

#### Meet the Feebles

New Zealand 1989/  
Surprise Video SUR V 01009 Price £12.99  
Certificate 18 Director Peter Jackson  
(S&S May 1992)

#### Midnight Cowboy

USA 1969/MGM/UA PES 50193  
Price £10.99/Widescreen  
Certificate 18 Director John Schlesinger  
Jon Voight's get-rich-quick plan goes sour when he can't crack it as a gigolo. Voight teams up with con-artist Dustin Hoffman, who shares his aspirations. (MFB No. 467)

#### The Nostril Picker

USA 1988/VIPCO VIP 033 Price £12.99  
Certificate 18 Director Mark Nowicki  
Producers Steven Hodge, Patrick J. Matthews, Mark Nowicki  
Screenplay Steven Hodge Lead Actors Carl Zschering, Edward Tanner, Laura Cummings 76 minutes  
A loner who can change his sex at will lures teenage girls to their death. This exploitation pic looks like a TV version of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* filmed by John Waters. So cheap, the director is incorrectly credited on the sleeve! Aka: *The Changer*

#### Other People's Money

USA 1991/Warner PES 12223 Price £10.99  
Certificate 15 Director Norman Jewison  
(S&S December 1991)

#### Patrick

Australia 1978/VIPCO VIP 031  
Price £12.99  
Certificate 18 Director Richard Franklin  
Producers Richard Franklin, Anthony I. Ginnane Screenplay Everett de Roche Lead Actors Susan Penhaligon, Robert Helpmann, Rod Mullinar 107 minutes



The prisoner: François Leterrier in 'A Man Escaped'



Scarlet woman: Gong Li in 'Ju Dou'

Four years after his mother and her lover have an electrical 'accident' in the bath, the comatose Patrick starts to exhibit strange psychic powers.

#### Quick Change

USA 1990/Warner PES 12004 Price £10.99  
Certificate 15  
Directors Howard Franklin, Bill Murray  
(S&S May 1991)

#### Requiem for a Vampire

France 1971/Redemption RETN 009  
Price £12.99  
Certificate 18 Director Jean Rollin Producers Jean Rollin, Sam Selsky Screenplay Jean Rollin Lead Actors Marie-Pierre Castel, Mireille Dargent, Philippe Gaste 95 minutes  
Two women on the run seek refuge in a castle and fall prey to a vampire. Rollin's fourth sex-vampire film has almost no dialogue.

#### The Seventh Seal (Det Sjunde Inseglat)

Sweden 1957/Tartan Video TVT 1081S  
Price £21.99  
Certificate PG Director Ingmar Bergman  
The first video release for Bergman's famous film. A knight returns from the Crusades to find his homeland ravaged by the plague. A limited edition box set which comes with an illustrated script. *B/W* Subtitles (MFB No. 292)

#### Shining Through

USA 1992/FoxVideo 5561 Price £10.99  
Certificate 15 Director David Seltzer  
(S&S April 1992)

#### Showdown in Little Tokyo

USA 1991/Warner PES 12311 Price £10.99  
Certificate 18 Director Mark Lester  
(S&S Video June 1992)

#### The Silence (Tystnaden)

Sweden 1963/Tartan Video TVT 1075S  
Price £15.99  
Certificate 15 Director Ingmar Bergman  
A lesbian intellectual wastes away from alcohol and TB while her sister Anna indulges herself sexually, leaving her young son to follow a troupe of dwarves. *B/W* Subtitles (MFB No. 365)

#### Sinatra

USA 1992/Warner PES 12678 Price £19.99  
Certificate PG Director James Sadwith  
Producer Richard Rosenbloom  
Screenplay William Mastrosimone  
Lead Actors Philip Casnoff, Olympia Dukakis, Joe Santos, Gina Gershon, Rod Steiger 228 minutes  
The authorised story of Frank 'Blue Eyes' Sinatra, tracing his upbringing as an only child to his later success. A Golden Globe Award-winning television bio-pic, executive produced by Tina Sinatra.

#### Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country

USA 1991/CIC Video VHR 2760/2558  
Price £12.99  
Certificate PG Director Nicholas Meyer  
(S&S March 1992)

#### Tetsuo: The Iron Man

Japan 1989/ICA Projects ICAV 1002  
Price £12.99  
Certificate 18 Director Shinya Tsukamoto  
A metal fetishist, trying to rearrange his body with metal pieces, is run over by an office worker who in turn sprouts metal shards. Cyberpunk and Manga converge in a barrage of images and noises. Brimming with ideas. *B/W* Subtitles (S&S September 1991)

#### Tous les matins du monde

France 1992/Electric Pictures EP 0026  
Price £15.99  
Certificate 15 Director Alain Corneau  
Court composer Marin Marais reflects during a rehearsal at Versailles on his past relationship with the ascetic viol player Sainte Colombe and his two devoted daughters. An elegant, reverential treatise on the nature of music and high art. Subtitles (S&S January 1993)

#### Twelve Angry Men

USA 1957/MGM/UA S051270 Price £8.99  
Certificate U Director Sidney Lumet  
For the majority of a jury deciding the fate of a young murder suspect on a hot summer's day, the verdict is guilty - the lone unconvinced outsider is a young Henry Fonda, who has the task of convincing the others. Lumet's debut film makes superb use of the confined set. *B/W* (MFB No. 281)

#### Urga

France/USSR 1990/Curzon CV 0018  
Price £15.99  
Certificate PG Director Nikita Mikhalkov  
A comical culture clash ensues when a tribesman rescues a Russian truck driver from an accident in Inner Mongolia. The tribesman accompanies the driver to the local town to buy condoms and a TV set. Subtitles (S&S April 1992)



### Les Valseuses

France 1974/Tartan Video TVT  
1070S Price £15.99/Widescreen

**Certificate 18** Director Bertrand Blier  
Darkly comic picaresque tale of two tearaways who roam France indulging themselves in adolescent escapades. Blier's misogyny runs riot but his irreverence still has the power to shock. *Subtitles* (MFB No. 503)

### Vampire Hunter D

Japan 1985/  
Manga MANV 1011 Price £12.99

**Certificate 15** Director Toyoo Ashida  
Producers Hiroshi Kato, Mitsuhsa Koeda, Yukio Nagasaki Screenplay Yasushi Hirano  
Character Designer Yoshitaka Amano  
80 minutes

Good and evil clash when Vampire Hunter D tries to wrest reluctant bride Doris from the clutches of count Magnus Lee. The count's defences include a spider-spitter and an old woman who projects a psychic wolf attack.

### Vampyr

France/Germany 1932/  
Redemption RETN 010 Price £12.99

**Certificate PG** Director Carl Dreyer  
David Gray tries to protect himself and two young women from vampires in a mysterious European village. Dreyer's use of hazy images, eerie soundtrack and disjointed narrative still manage to unsettle. Unfortunately the print is poor. *B/W Subtitles* (MFB No. 511)

### Winter Light (Nattvardsgästerna)

Sweden 1963/Tartan Video TVT 1068S  
Price £15.99/Widescreen

**Certificate PG** Director Ingmar Bergman  
A village pastor who has doubts about his belief in God fails with his sermons to comfort his mistress, a widow, and a fisherman who's afraid of nuclear annihilation. The second in the director's trilogy known as 'The Communicants'. *B/W Subtitles* (MFB No. 353)

### A Winter's Tale (Conte d'hiver)

France 1992/Artificial Eye ART 052  
Price £15.99/Widescreen

**Certificate 15** Director Eric Rohmer  
The second of Rohmer's 'Tales of the Four Seasons' is about a hairdresser in Belleville who, although having affairs with two men, is obsessed with the memory of the father of her daughter. *Subtitles* (S&S January 1993)

### Witness For the Prosecution

USA 1957/Warner S0 52517 Price £8.99

**Certificate U** Director Billy Wilder  
A lawyer takes on the hopeless case of murder suspect Leonard Vole whose only alibi is his wife's testimony. Sterling adaptation of Agatha Christie's play with Marlene Dietrich and Charles Laughton. *B/W* (MFB No. 289)

### Yojimbo

Japan 1961/Connoisseur Video CR 117  
Price £15.99/Widescreen

**Certificate PG** Director Akira Kurosawa  
A samurai warrior offers his services to the highest bidder in a town divided by two warring factions then attempts to arrange their mutual self-annihilation. Kurosawa's homage to the Western displays his expert use of CinemaScope. *B/W Subtitles* (MFB No. 438)

## Retail collections

### The James Bond Collection:

**Live and Let Die/The Man With the Golden Gun/Moonraker/The Spy Who Loved Me**

UK 1973/1974/1979/1977/  
MGM/UA S0 51418/52184/51419/  
52734/51422/51710/51421/51743  
Price £9.99 (Fullscreen)/  
£12.99 (Widescreen) each  
**Certificate PG**

Directors Guy Hamilton/Lewis Gilbert  
The first four Roger Moore *Bond* films to be released are all digitally remastered and are available in both widescreen and fullscreen. The last three in the collection are released next month, joining the Connery versions already on the market. (MFB Nos. 475/492/547/523)

### The Norman Wisdom Collection:

**The Early Bird/Just My Luck/One Good Turn/On the Beat/The Square Peg/Trouble in Store**

UK 1965/1957/1954/1962/1958/1953/  
VCI VC3419/3425/3420/3424/3422/3417  
Price £8.99 each  
**Certificate U** Directors Robert Asher/  
John Paddy Carstairs

A handsomely packaged collection which coincides with the release of Wisdom's autobiography *Don't Laugh at Me* and a South Bank show TV special looking at the phenomenon of this most British of screen comedians. (MFB Nos. 384/288/253/349/300/240)

## Laser disc

### Easy Rider

Columbia TriStar LD 10005  
PAL CLV Widescreen (ratio unspecified)  
USA 1969 Price £24.99  
(see Video Retail)

### Gladiator

Columbia TriStar LD 13644  
PAL CLV Fullscreen 1.33:1  
USA 1992 Price £24.99  
(S&S Video February 1993)

### Henry V

Columbia TriStar LD 12761  
PAL CLV (2 disc set) Widescreen 1.66:1  
UK 1989 Price £34.99  
**Certificate PG** Director Kenneth Branagh  
Branagh, Emma Thompson, Paul Scofield and Derek Jacobi lead this finely mounted, if somewhat unremarkable, adaptation of the Shakespeare play. (MFB No. 669)

### Oliver!

Columbia TriStar LD 10048  
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1  
UK 1968 Price £34.99  
(S&S Video May 1992)

### The Seventh Seal (Det Sjunde Inseglet)

Tartan TVT 1081  
PAL CAV (2 disc set) Academy 1.33:1  
Sweden 1957 Price £29.95  
(See Video Retail)

### Les Valseuses

Tartan TVL 1070  
PAL CLV Widescreen 1.75:1  
France 1974 Price £29.95  
(See Video Retail)

## WIND UP

By Peter Dean

If the recent decision by the BBFC to delay the video releases of 'Reservoir Dogs' and 'Bad Lieutenant' is anomalous considering that equally violent films have been given certificates in the past (see Editorial, Sight and Sound May 1993), just as baffling are the double standards regarding sexual explicitness on video.

The main distinction is between a video for educational purposes as opposed to one for entertainment only. Images of copulation, for example, are allowed under an educational remit or where the work is, according to BBFC director James Ferman, "in the interests of art, literature or learning". But it is a different story for videos that occupy the shelves of the 'adult' section of the video store. In the grey world of censorship, the downmarket erotica titles are unable to show what their educational and art-house counterparts can.

The BBFC's decision to allow the high-profile 'The Lover's Guide 3: Better Orgasms' to show an ejaculation is a landmark in censorship terms in this country. The only other time that such an image has been passed, and some consider it an oversight, was in the 'obscure' film 'Pink Narcissus'. In mainstream erotica ejaculation shots are invariably cut, as are prolonged genital close-ups, some audible obscenities and any sight of a male erection or sexual penetration.

The sex education videos, of which 'The Lover's Guide' was the first, are permitted to show images of real sex, and have found a lucrative loophole in the law. 'The Lover's Guide' grossed almost £7 million in the few months after its release – a figure equivalent to the UK box-office takings of a successful Hollywood movie – and gave rise to a series of copycat videos with such 'educational' titles as 'Kama Sutra' and 'Supervirility'. Because the BBFC considers that these videos teach rather than titillate, explicit images normally found only in illegal hardcore pornography in this country are available under the guise of education.

Two ICA Projects videos released this month, 'Marquis' and 'Tetsuo: The Iron Man', contain scenes of a graphic (sexual and violent) nature, but they have been allowed to be released uncut by the censor on the grounds of their 'artistic' merits. In 'Marquis' the penis of the central character (played by an actor dressed as an animal) is felled and later cut by a knife, while the Japanese sci-fi fantasy 'Tetsuo: The Iron Man' has a man's revolving metal phallus skewer his lover. In 'Les Amants du Pont-Neuf', recently released on video, Denis Lavant with an erect penis chases Juliette Binoche across the beach. This situation isn't new: art and education films in previous decades have often been allowed a higher degree of



Metal fatigue: 'Tetsuo: The Iron Man'

permissiveness than their mainstream counterparts.

The BBFC has gradually been trying to lessen the gap between what is sexually permissible in the UK and on the continent, with an eye to a harmonisation of standards. Tapes such as 'The Lover's Guide' are, according to James Ferman, testing the ground of what is acceptable.

"We're feeling our way a little bit and exploring what the standards are. Because our certificate does not grant exemption from the law, every time we make a decision we're watching to see if the courts decide we have gone too far, and if that's the case then we must pull back. In the 18 months since we passed 'The Lover's Guide' we've found roughly a standard that seems to be acceptable... I think the first 'The Lover's Guide' was taken before one court, but the case was thrown out by the magistrate as an abuse of process. He said that the video was genuine sex education."

It seems that complaints about sex on video are coming not from the public, but from people within the trade. The situation at present allows film producers who make 'educational' programmes a greater level of explicitness and larger potential profits. Scenes of bondage, for example, may be cut from mainstream erotica but can be found in the new gay men's sex guide 'In Safe Hands'. In the words of one producer: "You know what the guidelines are one day but you are never sure if they are going to be the same the next."

Postscript: Delays at the censor's office and the seemingly inconsistent cutting policy may seem inconsequential, but this is not the case for the rights holders, whose licensing period is being eaten into. 'Reservoir Dogs' is big business for the video pirates. You can currently buy a copy of 'Reservoir Dogs' for £10 on the video black market.



Being allowed to talk to himself: 'Marquis'



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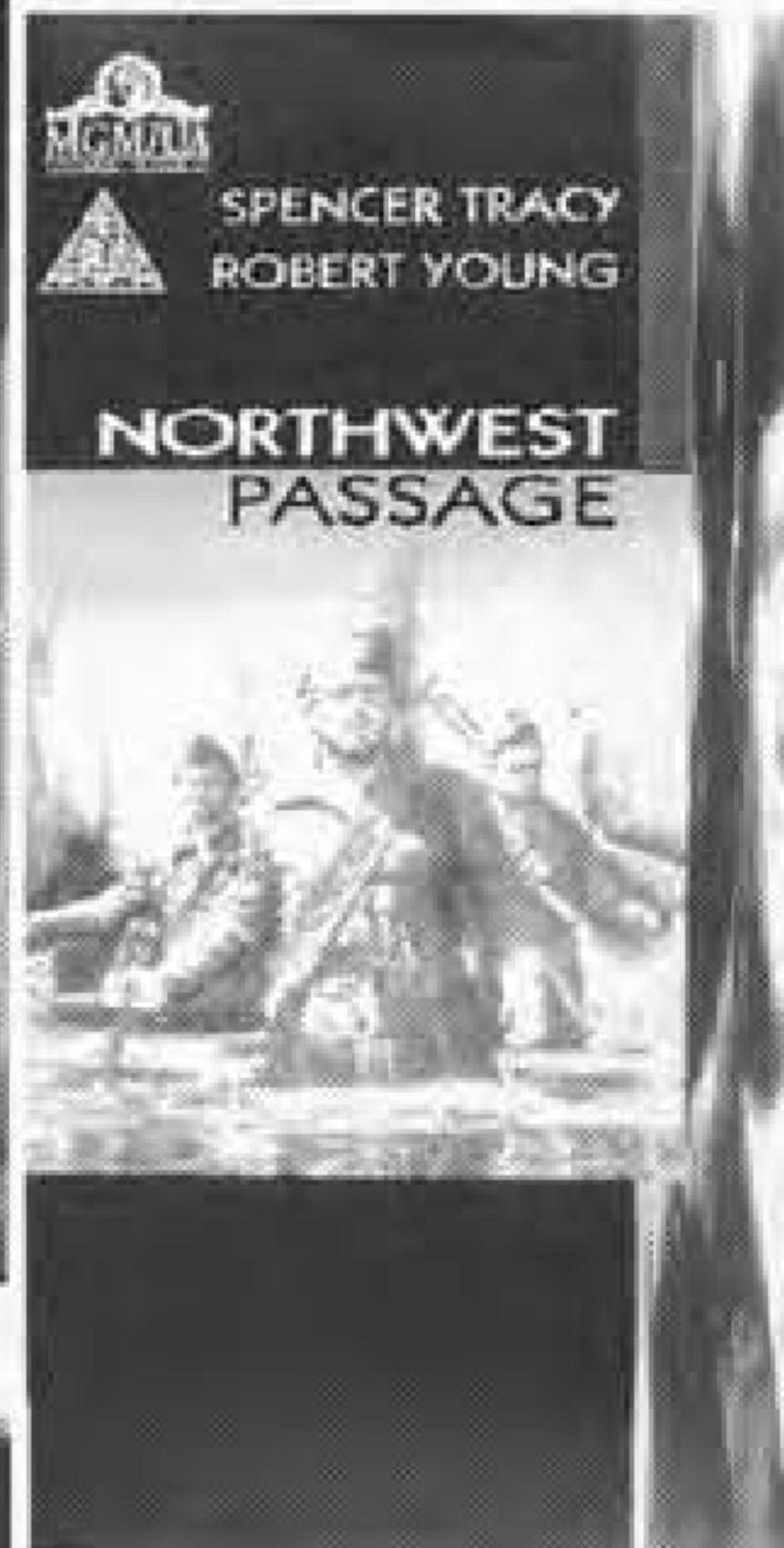
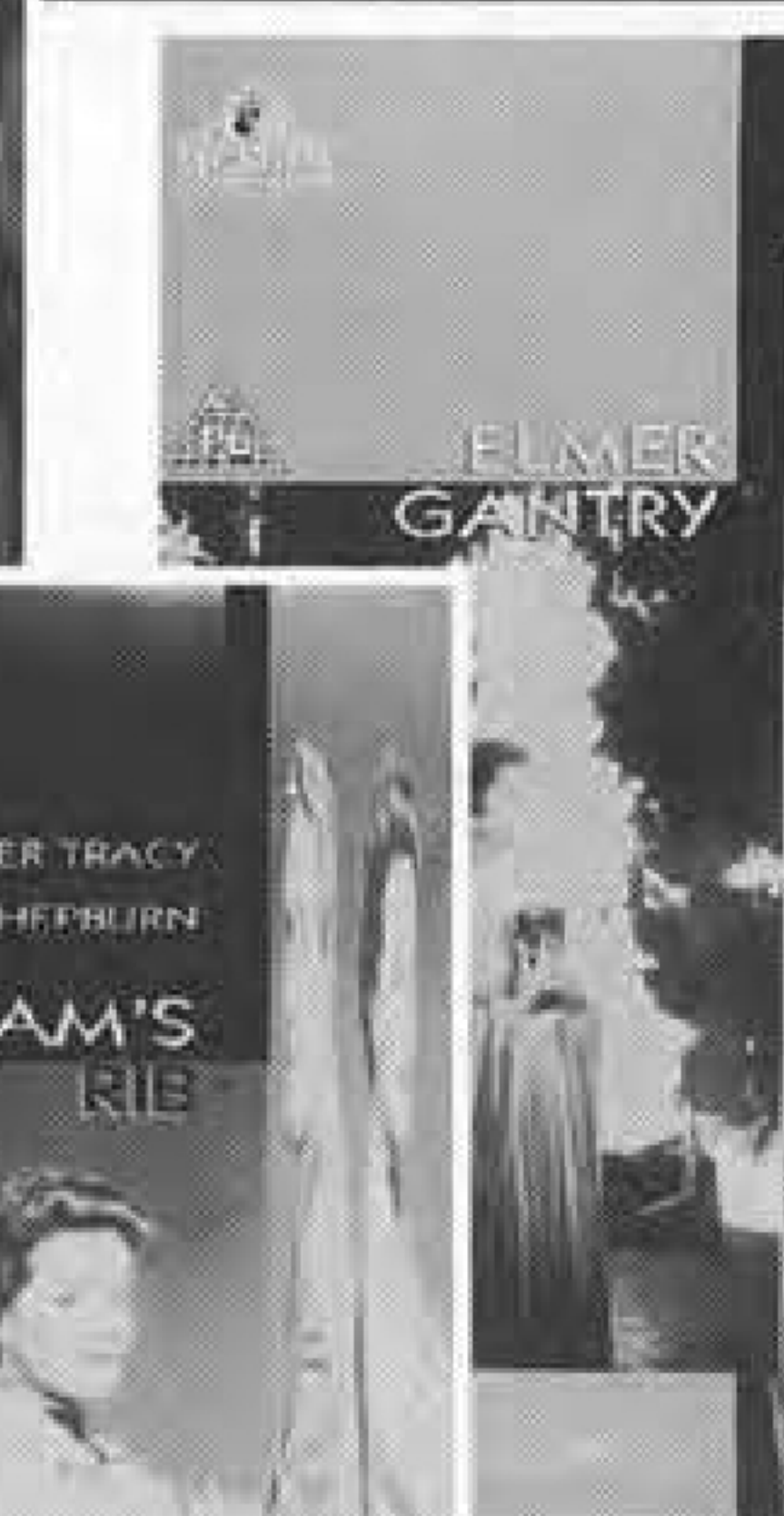
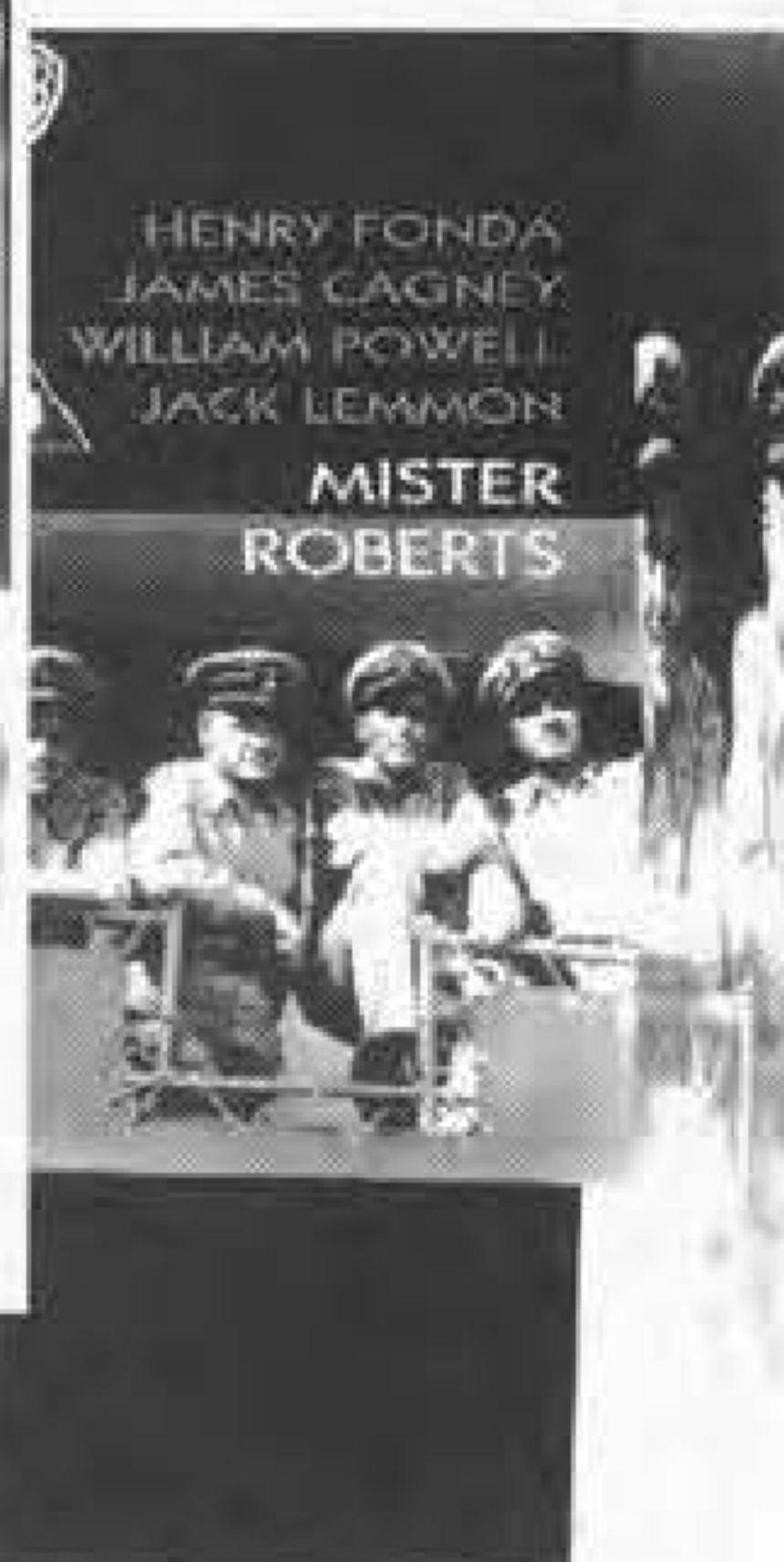
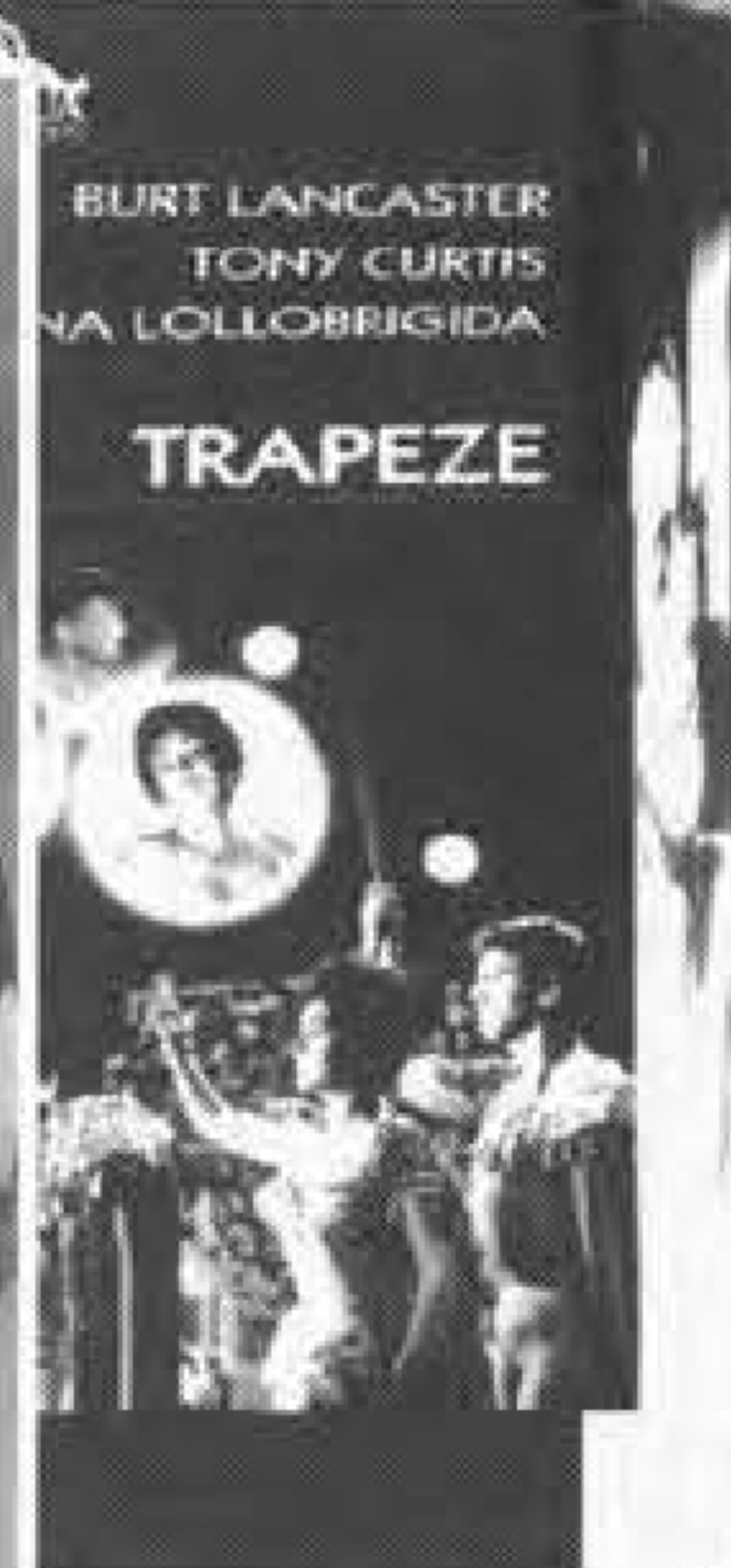
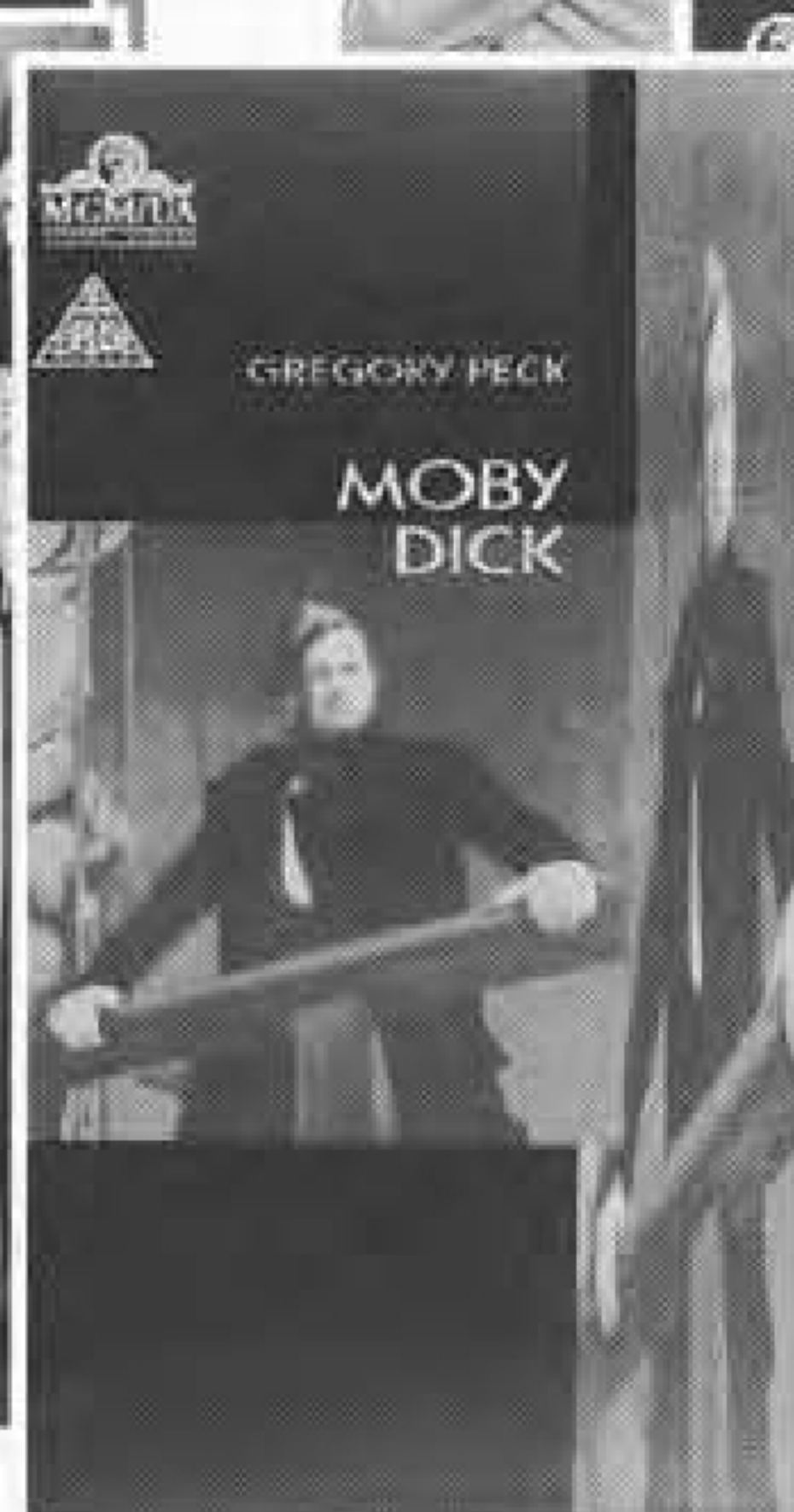
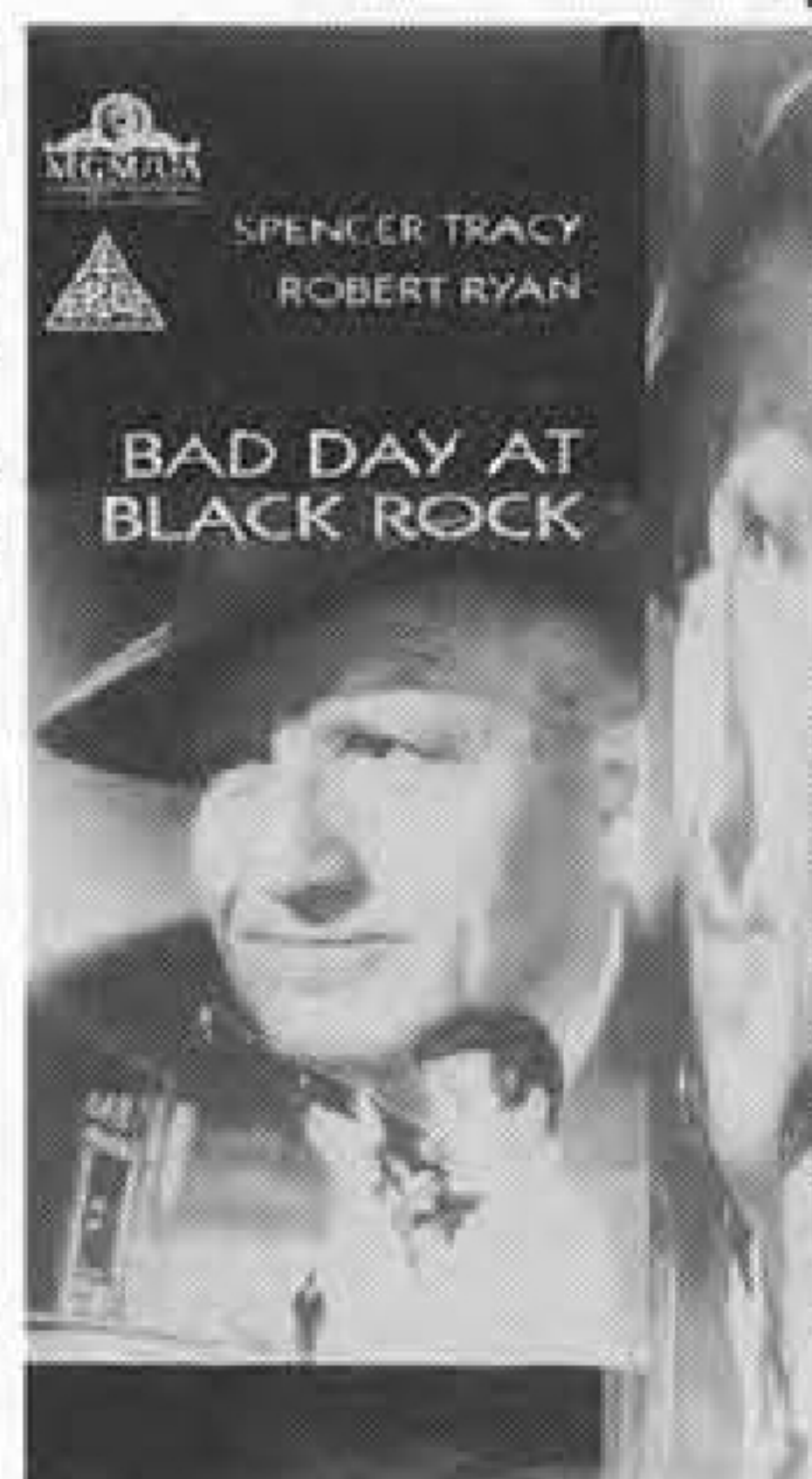
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# Letters

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## Reel to real violence

From Mary K. Tomlinson

Martin Barker in his article 'Sex, violence and videotape' (S&S May) conveniently aligns the current concern about violence and the media to government control of the national curriculum and even sees it as part of a conspiracy to expunge Media Studies in schools.

It simply will not do to trot out all those old arguments about moral panics in the past and the popular culture debate or whether we can actually prove a direct correlation between reel violence and real violence. Nobody is disputing the social and cultural contexts in which these debates exist. But what Barker fails to address is that many people who don't hold those Tory elitist views and may even, like myself, be a Media Studies teacher are concerned about the orgy of violence that is available on small and large screens.

It is a fact that films are now more graphic and violent than they were even 10 or 20 years ago. It is a fact that film companies make these films because they know they have an audience who will pay to see them. The institutionalised profit-seeking of film companies is something Barker fails to address in his attempt to construct his conspiracy theory. By his argument, gratuitous violence becomes some kind of guerilla weapon in the war against cultural imperialism.

We cannot prove that violent films lead to violent behaviour, although the incidence of violence has risen throughout the world this century. We all know there are plenty of other social and economic factors that may contribute to this. However, it seems to me that we cannot be a healthy society if most of our entertainment consists of paying to watch human beings slaughter each other in ever more gruesome ways. I am not talking here about films that address the issue of violence in a responsible and serious way, but about the plethora of 'video nasties' available at the corner video store. The majority of my students (aged 16-18) do not consider a film to be 'good' unless it contains a degree of graphic violence. I cannot but feel that their responses have been affected, 'corrupted' if you like, by the amount of violence they have witnessed. They probably won't grow up to be mass murderers, but I would prefer them to see films that hold human life to be valuable. If this means bringing back some form of censorship, then I am for it.

Brighton, East Sussex

## Colour coded

From Tim Turner

Having read Stephen Bourne's letter (S&S April), I wonder if I'm wildly misinterpreting him if I don't detect a mildly optimistic tone: Whoopi and Hattie and Butterfly might have been handed stereotypical roles, but they triumphed: Hollywood's track record is shaky, but there have been quite a few Oscar-nominated black women.

Let's face it: black talent is mildly less marginalised than it has been in the past,

but things are still dismal. Worldwide audiences want *Driving Miss Daisy* not *Do the Right Thing*; Warner Bros want *JFK* but dig their heels in deep for *Malcolm X*. We want to see Whoopi Goldberg singing gospel, reeling around as a streetwise spiritualist, we do not want to see her as one of us. The last thing audiences require is *Deep Cover*, an intelligent film made by a black man.

Can anyone conceive of *Single White Female* with a title change and Cynda Williams and Halle Berry? Does it seem likely that Angela Bassett or Wesley Snipes will find themselves vying for the same parts as Michelle Pfeiffer or Bruce Willis? There is no doubt that the talent is there, but there's no chance that casting choices will become colour blind any time soon.

Let no one pretend that there is anything to be optimistic about; things certainly aren't improving.

Wigan, Lancs

## Top ten votes

From Alan Pavelin

In his article on changes in the canon as measured by the *Sight and Sound* ten-yearly critics' polls (S&S May) Peter Wollen perhaps places too much weight on movements in the top ten lists when many films are bunched together over an extremely narrow range of scores.

For example, just four votes were enough to separate the films which came third and tenth in 1982 and fourth and tenth in 1992. If *2001: A Space Odyssey* had received just one more vote in 1992, it would have moved up from tenth to sixth. Peter Wollen refers to *Singin' in the Rain* disappearing completely in 1992, after having come third in 1982. In fact, its votes fell from 15 to 10, not particularly significant in statistical terms, although enough to push it down from third to eleventh place.

Obviously there are significant movements, of which the advance of *Tokyo Story* is the most striking, rising from 8 to 22 votes. It is also worth mentioning that the composition of the critics chosen has changed (the proportion from English-speaking countries has fallen from about two-thirds in 1982 to one-half in 1992), and this must have had an effect on the results.

Chislehurst, Kent

## Video versions

From Brad Stevens

Since Robin Holloway (S&S May) claims that my article 'A Cutting Art' (S&S April) "would have benefited from some elementary research," I feel compelled to point out that his letter would have benefited from some evidence that he had read the piece.

It may well be true that the "English language version" of *Mon Oncle* was "developed by Tati for release in English language speaking territories," but surely this was done not for artistic reasons but in order to obtain wider distribution, and the original French version must be considered superior. It is also less than useful for Holloway to point out that the European version of *Mr Arkadin* is, indeed, the European version. My point is that this European version, entitled *Confidential Report*, is vastly inferior to the US version, which contains the complete flashback structure. And since this latter version is in the public domain, there

seems little reason for *Connoisseur* not to have released it in the UK.

I am aware of the problems involved in obtaining rights and prints and satisfying the censor, and was suggesting not that *Connoisseur* "increase [their] output a hundredfold", but that it would have been more worthwhile to have cleared all these hurdles in the name of, say, *L'Avventura*, *Roma*, *Città Aperta* and *Ugetsu Monogatari*, rather than for *Boys Will Be Boys*, *The Arsenal Stadium Mystery* and *I See a Dark Stranger*.

Holloway seems to be somewhat confused regarding my account of the additional five seconds in *Zéro de conduite*, since I clearly state that this material is missing from the BBC's print, not, as he implies, from Artificial Eye's, which is complete. I am, of course, aware of the problems caused by BBFC interference, having pointed out that it was they who ordered a shot to be cut from *Andrei Rublev*.

It seems to me legitimate to ask why, if seven seconds had been cut from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, there was no indication of this on the packaging, for surely this can only be interpreted as *Connoisseur's* attempt to lure the unwary consumer into believing that the video she or he is purchasing is (as, in all good faith, s/he is entitled to assume) complete? (Why, incidentally, have the shots of horses being trip-wired been cut from this film, *Walker and Ulzana's Raid*, but left intact in *Spartacus* and *The Alamo*?)

Luton, Bedfordshire

## Realm of the censors

From Steve Lambert

Earlier this year I ordered a laser disc of the uncut *Ai no Corrida* (In the Realm of the Senses) from the US. The disc was seized in the mail by HM Customs and Excise on the grounds that it portrays "explicit scenes of fellatio, masturbation, intercourse and insertion of an object to the vagina".

I have decided to appeal against destruction of the disc, which means that the matter will be decided by a magistrates court. As this is a civil case, not a criminal matter, it is up to me to prove that the disc is not "indecent or obscene". It is my understanding that a copy of a film can be forfeited in such a case on the grounds of indecency even if it does not contravene the "deprave and corrupt" test of the Obscene Publications Act.

As I will be representing myself, I am seeking information and support in preparation for this case. I would like to know if the film has won any international awards, and where and when the uncut version has been screened in this country (a copy of the film must presumably have been imported into this country, via Customs, at some stage to allow its showing at certain London cinemas). I would also appreciate copies or sources of reviews.

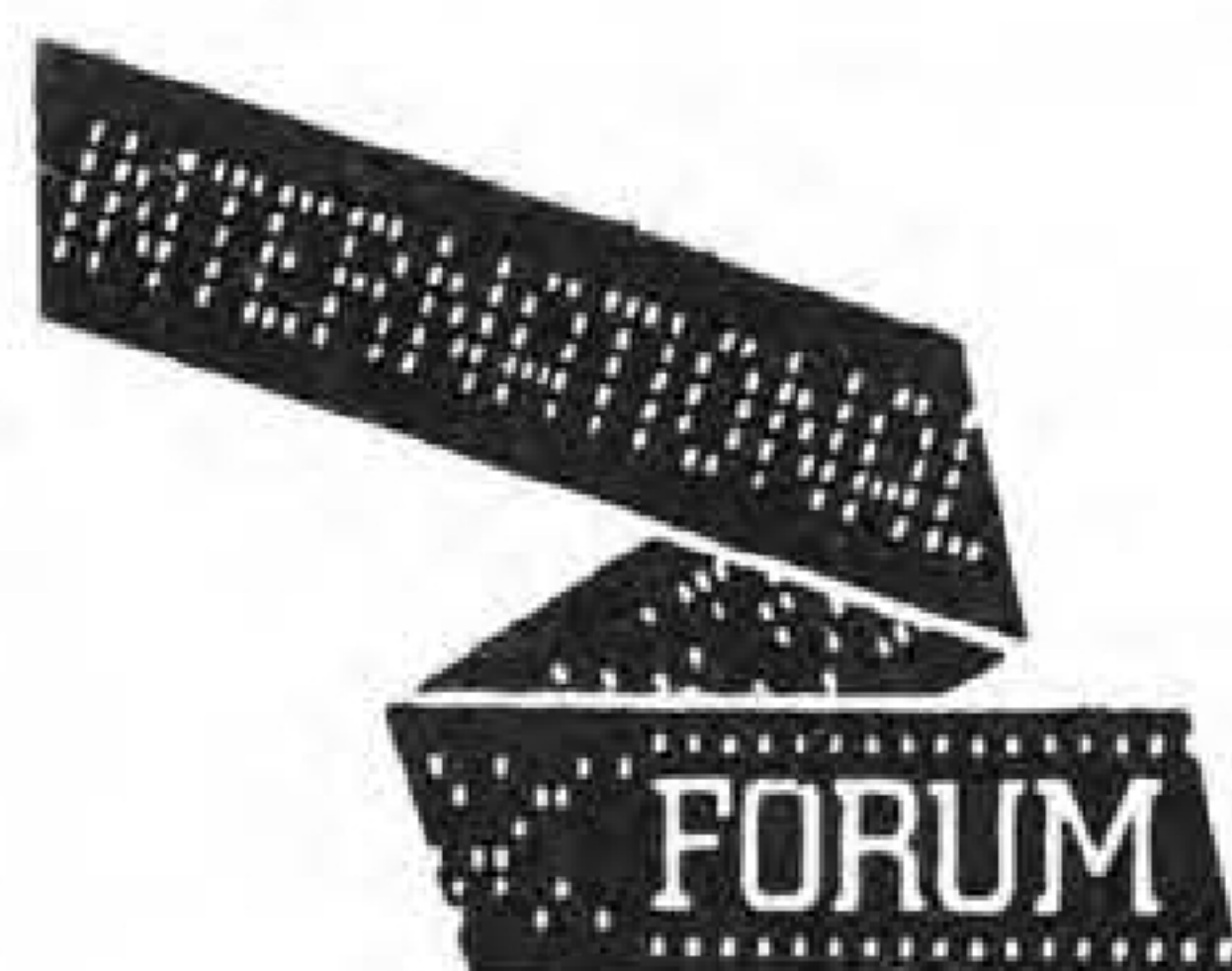
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## Corrections

**April 1993:** *One False Move* (p.52): 'Hawkins' should read 'Dixon' throughout.

**May 1993:** *Groundhog Day* (p. 50): Harold Ramis co-wrote and appeared in, but did not direct, *Ghostbusters*; *Léolo* (p. 51): 'Léo Lauzon' should read 'Léo Lauzeau'.





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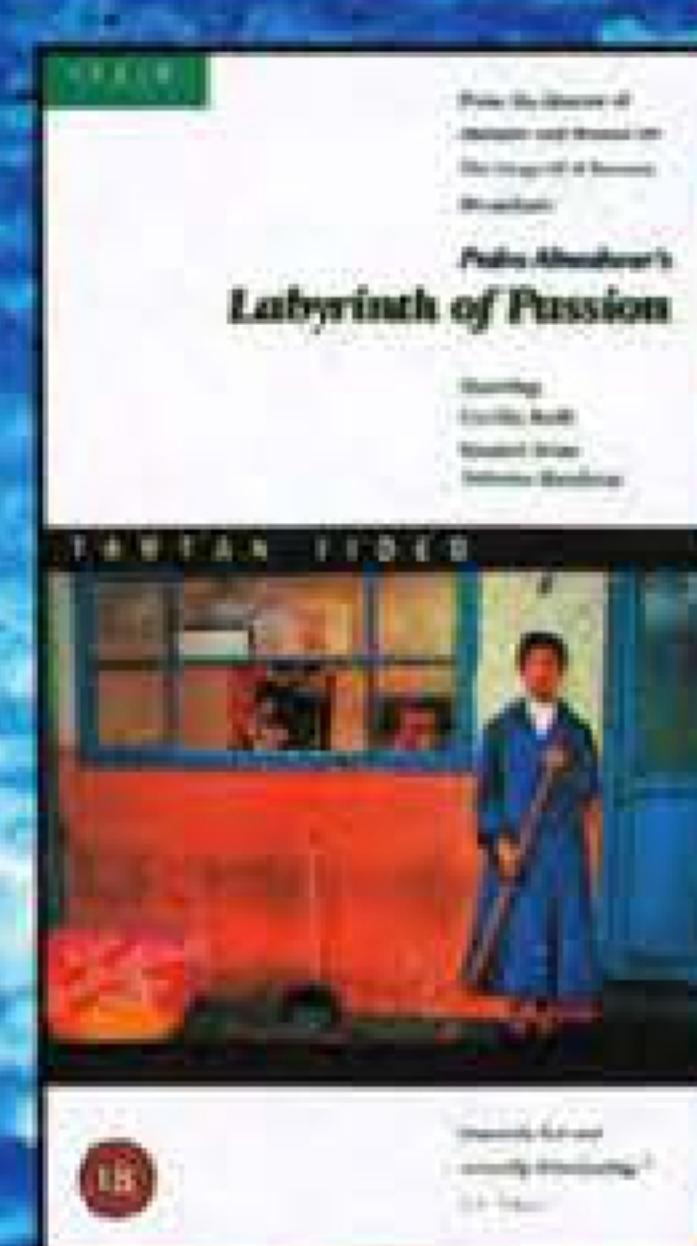
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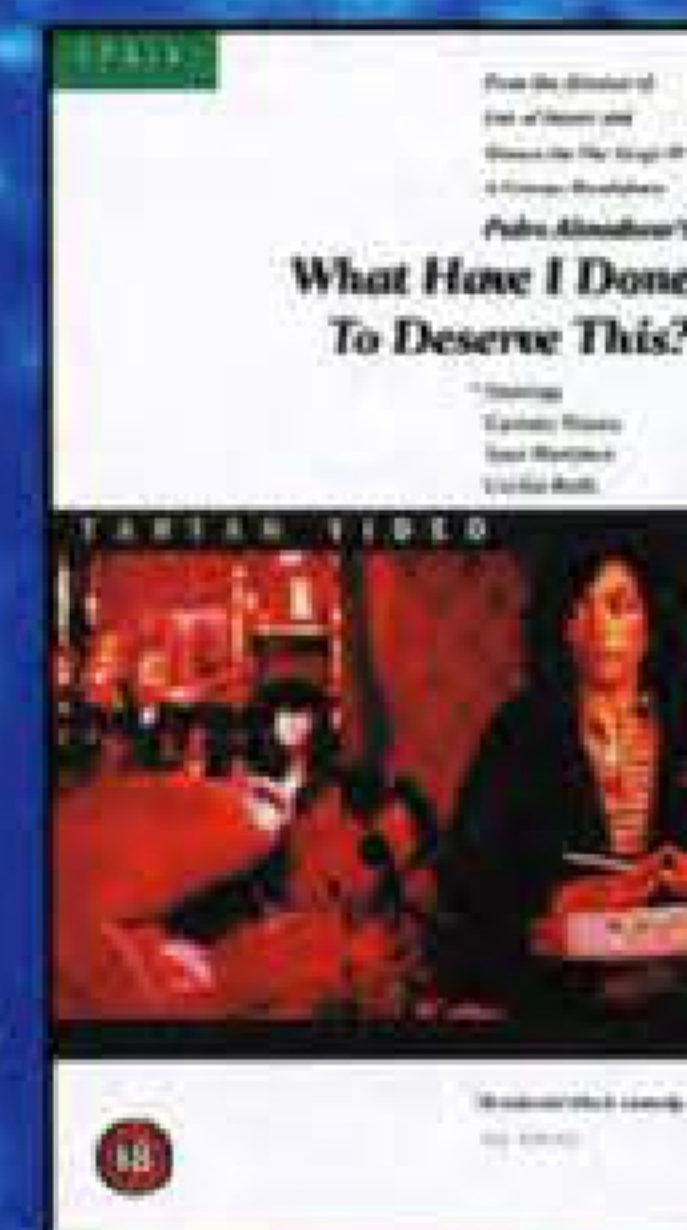
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